

I . S . T U R G E N E V

Three Short Novels

ASYA * FIRST LOVE *
SPRING TORRENTS



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

M O S C O W

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A S Y A



I

I WAS twenty-five years old then, began N. N., so you see all this is ancient history. I had only just escaped from tutelage and was going abroad, not to "complete my education," as they used to say in those days, but simply because I wanted to have a look at the wide world. I was healthy, young, high-spirited; I had money in abundance, but had as yet acquired no responsibilities—and I lived for the moment, in a word, did what I liked; it was the spring-time of my life. It had not then so much as occurred to me that man is not a plant and that his spring-time is but a brief one. The youth eats gilt gingerbread, taking it for daily fare; but the time will come when he will be glad of a crust. There is no point in dwelling on this, though.

I travelled with neither aim nor plan, stopping wherever I liked and resuming my journey as soon as I felt a desire for new faces—faces were what I craved for. The only thing that interested me was human beings; I detested interesting monuments, magnificent collections, the very sight of a cicerone aroused in me feelings of disgust and antipathy; I was bored to death in the Dresden Grüne Gewölbe. Nature affected me intensely, but I did not care for so-called natural beauties, for impressive peaks, cliffs, or waterfalls; I did not like to have Nature forced on my notice, I would not brook her in-

terference. But faces, living human faces, human speech, the movements and laughter of human beings—these were things I could not do without. I was always peculiarly happy and at my ease in a crowd—I liked going where others went, shouting when others shouted, and at the same time was fond of observing how these others shouted. My chief amusement was to observe human beings. . . and I did not merely observe them, I examined them with a kind of joyous, insatiable curiosity. But again I am straying from my narrative.

Well then, twenty years ago I was living in the small German town of Z., on the left bank of the Rhine. I was in search of solitude, having recently been smitten by the charms of a certain young widow whose acquaintance I had made at a watering-place. She was extremely handsome and clever, and flirted with all and sundry, including my unworthy self, first encouraging me, only to wound me cruelly and abandon me for a rosy-checked Bavarian lieutenant. It must be admitted that the wound to my heart was not so very deep, but I considered myself bound to indulge in melancholy and solitude for a certain time—youth finds its solace—and took up my residence in the town of Z.

This little town took my fancy by its situation at the foot of two high hills, by its crumbling walls and towers, by its immemorial lime-trees and the high bridge over the sparkling river, a tributary of the Rhine, and, most of all, by its good wine. The prettiest blonde German damsels waiked up and down the narrow streets every evening as soon as the sun had set (it was June), greeting the foreigner with a pleasantly uttered *Guten Abend*; some of them did not even go in when the moon rose behind the steep roofs of the ancient houses and the small cobble-stones in the road lay clearly outlined in its still beams. It was then that I liked best to roam the streets of the little town. The moon seemed to be gazing

steadily down at it from the pure sky, and the town felt this gaze and lay there serene and responsive, flooded in the moonlight, that tranquil light which is nevertheless so subtly disturbing. The weathercock on top of the high Gothic steeple shone a pale gold, and the same gold shimmered on the black gleaming surface of the river. Slender candles (the Germans are a thrifty nation!) flickered modestly in the narrow windows beneath slate roofs. Vines thrust out curling tendrils mysteriously from behind stone walls; something flitted by in the shadow of the ancient well in the middle of the triangular town-square, the drowsy whistle of the night-watchman suddenly broke the silence, an amiable dog growled softly, and the air was so caressing to one's face, the lime-trees were so fragrant, that one breathed ever deeper and deeper, and the word Gretchen rose to one's lips in something between an exclamation and a question.

The town of Z. lies a mile or two from the bank of the Rhine. I often went to gaze upon the mighty river and sat for hours at a time on a stone bench beneath a huge, solitary ash-tree, forcing myself to brood over the fickle widow. A little statue of the Madonna, with a child-like face and a crimson heart stabbed through and through with swords exposed on its breast, peered sadly out from among its foliage. On the opposite bank lay the town of L., which was a little larger than that in which I had taken up my residence. One evening I was sitting on my favourite bench, gazing in turns at the river, the sky and the vineyards. Flaxen-headed urchins were scrambling over the side of a boat, hauled on to the bank with its tar-smeared keel uppermost. Ships glided slowly downstream with slack sails; the greenish waves slipped by with faintly gurgling ripples. Suddenly the strains of music greeted my ears; I listened more attentively. A waltz was being played in the town of L.;

the double-bass boomed spasmodically, the violin poured out a vague melody, the flute whistled cheerfully.

"What's that?" I asked of an old man in a velveteen waistcoat, blue stockings and buckled shoes, who was just then approaching me.

"That?" he repeated, removing the stem of his pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other. "It's the students from B. who have come here to hold their *Kommers*."

"I should like to have a look at this *Kommers*," I thought to myself. "And I've never been in L., either." I sought out the ferryman and crossed to the opposite bank.

II

It may be that there are some who do not know what a *Kommers* is. It is a kind of solemn feast attended by all the students from the same district or fraternity (*Landsmannschaft*). Almost all the participants in a *Kommers* wear the time-honoured costume of German students—short military tunics, high-boots, and tiny caps with bands of the prescribed colour. The students usually assemble for their dinner under the auspices of a senior, that is to say an elder, and feast till the small hours, drinking, singing their songs—*Landesvater, Gaudeamus*—smoking, abusing the philistines. Sometimes they hire a band.

A *Kommers* of precisely this description was being held in the town of L., in a garden opening on to the street in front of the modest "Sun" Inn. Garden and inn were decked with fluttering flags; the students sat at tables beneath the clipped lime-trees; a huge bulldog reposed under one of the tables; the musicians sat a little apart, in an ivy-grown arbour, scraping away valiantly, and occasionally refreshing themselves with draughts of beer. There were a number of people in the

street, gathered in front of the low railings of the garden; the good people of L. were determined not to miss the opportunity for gazing at the guests. I joined the crowd of onlookers. It amused me to watch the faces of the students; their embraces, exclamations, the innocent affectations of youth, the fiery glances, causeless laughter—the best kind of laughter in the world—all this joyous surge of fresh, youthful life, this impulse to go forward—anywhere so long as it was forward—this good-natured abandon, touched and inspired me. I almost felt inclined to join them myself. . . .

“Haven’t you seen enough, Asya?” said a masculine voice just behind me, speaking Russian.

“Let’s wait a little longer,” replied a feminine voice in the same language.

I turned swiftly. . . . My glance fell on a good-looking young man wearing a peaked cap and a loose jacket; he was holding by the arm a girl, not very tall, with a straw hat covering the whole upper part of her face.

The words: “Are you Russians?” slipped involuntarily from my lips.

The young man smiled and said: “Yes.”

“I never expected . . . in such a remote hole—” I began.

“Nor did we!” he broke in. “But so much the better! Let me introduce myself—my name’s Gagin, and this is my—” he stumbled in his speech for a moment—“my sister. And what is your name, may I ask?”

I named myself and we got into conversation. I learned that Gagin, who, like myself, was travelling for pleasure, had come to the town of L. about a week before, and there he had stayed. Truth to say, I was not very anxious to make friends with Russians abroad. I could tell them at a distance by their gait, the cut of their clothes, and especially by the expression of their faces. Usually complacent and contemptuous, frequently domineering, this expression would suddenly change to one of

caution and anxiety; the man would all at once be on the alert, his gaze shifting uneasily. "Oh dear, I hope I haven't done anything foolish! They aren't laughing at me, are they?" seemed to say his flurried glance. . . . A moment passed, and once more the majesty of countenance would be restored, with occasional lapses into blank astonishment. Yes, I avoided Russians, but I took an immediate fancy to Gagin. There are faces which everyone likes looking at, faces which seem to warm and soothe, and Gagin's was one of these—pleasing, kindly, with great, soft eyes and soft, curling hair. And when he spoke, even if you did not see his face, you would feel, from the sound of his voice alone, that he was smiling.

The girl he called his sister at once struck me as exceedingly pretty. There was something individual and original in her round, olive-skinned face, with the small, fine nose, almost childish cheeks, and luminous black eyes. She was gracefully built but did not seem to have grown to maturity yet. She was not in the least like her brother.

"Will you come home with us?" Gagin suggested. "I think we've been looking at Germans long enough. Our students would certainly have begun breaking the glasses and chairs by now, these are awfully tame. What do you say to going home, Asya?"

The girl nodded assent.

"We live outside town," continued Gagin, "in a lonely house, in the middle of a vineyard, very high up. It's a nice place, you'll love it! Our landlady promised to have some sour milk ready for us. It will be dark soon, and you'd better wait for the moon to rise before crossing the Rhine."

We set off. Passing through the narrow gates of the town (it was surrounded by an ancient wall formed of rough stones, on which battlements were still intact in places), we emerged in open country, walked close to the

wall for about a hundred yards and came to a stop at a tiny wicket-gate. Gagin opened it and led us up the slope by a steep path. On either side grew vines planted in terraces; the sun had only just set, and a liquid crimson light lay on the green vines, the tall stamens, the dry soil, the crazy pavement of flag-stones, and the white walls of a small house, with black, slanting beams and four gleaming windows, which stood on the crest of the hill.

"This is our abode!" exclaimed Gagin as we approached. "And there's our landlady bringing us the milk. *Guten Abend, Madame!* . . . We'll have something to eat in a minute, but first," he added, "look behind you—how do you like our view?"

The view was indeed beautiful. The Rhine lay far beneath us, silvery between its green banks; in one place it glowed with the crimson gold of the sunset. The little town, nestling on the bank, showed all its houses and streets; hills and fields extended far into the distance. It was fair enough below, but above it was still more beautiful. The purity and depth of the sky, the radiant transparency of the atmosphere, made a deep impression on me. The air was cool and light, heaving and undulating as if it, too, felt freer at that height.

"You've chosen a wonderful place to stay at," I said.

"Asya found it," replied Gagin. "Come, Asya," he continued, "give your orders. Have everything served out of doors. We'll have supper here. You can hear the music better. Have you noticed," he continued, turning to me, "how a waltz that is simply abominable close by, just a jumble of coarse, vulgar sounds, is suddenly transformed and stirs all your romantic chords when you hear it from a distance?"

Asya (her name was really Anna, but Gagin called her Asya, and with your permission, I will do the same) went into the house and was soon back again with the landlady. They carried between them a big tray, on which

were a jug of milk, plates, spoons, sugar, berries, and bread. We sat down and began to eat. Asya took off her hat; her black hair, which she wore rather short, and brushed smoothly over her head, like a young man's, fell in heavy locks round her neck and ears. At first she was shy with me, but Gagin chided her for this.

"Stop sulking, Asya! He won't bite you!"

She smiled and a short time after began talking to me of her own accord. I have never seen a more restless creature. She did not sit still for a single moment; she was always getting up, running into the house and back, humming, laughing frequently and very strangely, as if she were laughing not at anything she heard, but at all sorts of thoughts which came into her head. Her big eyes looked straight ahead, brightly and fearlessly, but every now and then the lids contracted, and her glance was seen to be surprisingly deep and tender.

We chatted for nearly two hours. The day had long expired, and evening, first flaming, and gradually subsiding to a serene crimson glow, in its turn growing pale and faint, melted, shimmering, into night, but our talk went on and on, as tranquil and peaceful as the air around us. Gagin ordered a bottle of Rhine wine and we discussed it at our leisure. The music still reached our ears, but its sounds now seemed sweeter and softer; lights came out in the town and over the river. Asya, her head drooping, her locks falling over her eyes, grew suddenly silent, sighed; she told us she was going to bed, and went into the house; but I watched her for a long time, as, without lighting her candle, she stood at the closed window. At last the moon rose, its beams playing over the Rhine; everything looked different, some objects lit up, others plunged in darkness, even the wine in our cut-glass tumblers gleamed mysteriously. The wind dropped, as if folding its wings, and died down; a fragrant nocturnal warmth came from the ground.

"Time to go home!" I cried, "or I may not find anyone to ferry me across."

"Time to go home," echoed Gagin.

We went downhill by the path. Suddenly the stones rolled down behind us—Asya was running after us.

"I thought you were asleep," said her brother, but she ran past us without a word. The last dim torches lit by the students in the inn-garden illuminated the foliage from below, giving the trees a festive and fantastic aspect. We found Asya on the bank of the river, talking to the ferryman. I leaped into the boat and bade my new friends farewell. Gagin promised to come and see me the next day. I pressed his hand and held out my own to Asya, but she merely looked at me and shook her head. The boat put out and floated over the rapid stream. The ferryman, a hale old fellow, plunged the oars into the dark water with an effort.

"You've gone into the pillar of moonlight, you've broken it," Asya shouted after me.

I looked down—the water was heaving round the sides of the boat in dark waves.

"Good-bye!" rang out her voice once more.

"Till tomorrow," called out Gagin.

The boat touched shore. I got out and looked back. There was no longer anyone to be seen on the opposite bank. The pillar of moonlight again stretched right across the river like a bridge of gold. The sounds of the old-fashioned Lanner waltz came to my ears as if bidding me farewell. Gagin was right, all the chords in my soul quivered in response to those insinuating strains. I walked home over the dark fields, slowly inhaling the fragrant air, and arrived at my room quite languid from the sweet exhaustion of vague, endless anticipation. I felt happy. . . . But what was it that had made me happy? I desired nothing, I thought of nothing . . . I was happy.

I dived into the bed-clothes almost laughing from

excess of light, pleasing sensations, and was just about to close my eyes when I suddenly bethought myself that I had not once remembered my cruel beauty the whole evening. . . . "What does that mean?" I asked myself. "Am I not in love?" But with this I must have fallen asleep immediately, like a babe in its cradle.

III

The next morning (I was already awake, but ~~was~~ ^{remained} still in bed) there came the sound of a stick rattling against the window-pane, and a voice, which I immediately recognized as the voice of Gagin, sang:

*And if thou sleep'st, I'll wake thee
To the strains of my guitar. . . .*

I hastened to open the door to him.

"Good morning," he said, coming in. "I've disturbed you early, but just look what a morning it is! The air's so fresh, dew everywhere, larks singing. . . ."

With his curly, glossy hair, bare neck and pink cheeks he was as fresh as the morning himself.

I dressed; we went into the garden and sat on a bench, where we ordered coffee and began talking. Gagin informed me of his plans for the future. Having an adequate income and being quite independent, he planned to devote himself to art, and his only regret was that he had been so long making up his mind and had wasted so much time. I confided my own plans in him, initiating him, among other things, into the secret of my unhappy love. He heard me out indulgently, but as far as I could see my passion did not arouse much sympathy in him. Adding a few sighs to mine, out of politeness, he invited me to go home with him and look at his sketches. I readily consented.

We did not find Asya at home. She had gone, the landlady said, to "the ruins." A few miles beyond the town of L. were the ruins of a feudal castle. Gagin opened all his portfolios for me. There was a great deal of life and sincerity in his sketches, a certain freedom and breadth, but not one was finished, and I thought the drawing careless and feeble. I told him quite frankly what I thought.

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed, sighing. "You are right. It's all very poor and immature, but what can I do? I've never really studied, and then there is that accursed Slav slackness. While you're pondering what you will do, you soar like an eagle, you feel capable of moving mountains—but when it comes to execution, you suddenly become weak and weary."

I was about to make some encouraging remark, but he silenced me with a wave of his hand and, gathering all the portfolios into a heap, dumped them on to the sofa.

"If I have patience enough, something will come of me," he said through his teeth. "If not, I shall remain a dunce. Let's go and look for Asya!"

We went out of the house.

IV

The path to the ruins wound along the slope of a narrow wooded valley; the bottom of this valley formed the bed of a rapid stream, threading its noisy way over the stones as if in a hurry to merge with the great river gleaming tranquilly beyond the dark barrier of a sharply ridged mountain range. Gagin drew my attention to places on which the light rested with peculiar beauty, and his words showed that, though he might not be a painter, he had the soul of an artist. The ruins soon came in sight. On the crest of a naked rock rose a square

turret, all black, still sturdy, but split in two by a diagonal crack. Moss-grown walls extended on either side of it, and here and there ivy clung to its stones; crooked trees drooped from the hoary battlements and crumbling arches. A stony path led to the gates, which were still intact. Just as we approached them, the figure of a woman flashed by, scrambled rapidly over a heap of rubble and, coming to a halt on the ledge of a wall, appeared on the very edge of an abyss.

"Why, it's Asya!" exclaimed Gagin. "Mad girl!"

We passed through the gateway and found ourselves in a small court-yard overgrown with crab-apple trees and nettles. It was indeed Asya on the parapet. Turning her face in our direction she laughed, but did not move from her place. Gagin shook his finger at her, and I reproached her loudly for her recklessness.

"Leave her alone!" whispered Gagin to me. "Don't tease her. You don't know her. She'd think nothing of climbing the tower. Better observe and admire the common sense of the people here."

I looked round. In a corner, sheltered in a tiny wooden booth, an old woman sat knitting a stocking and peering at us through her spectacles. She sold beer, gingerbread and seltzer-water to tourists. We sat down on a bench and began drinking almost cold beer out of heavy pewter mugs. Asya sat motionless in her place, her legs tucked under her, a gauze scarf bound round her head; her graceful figure was charmingly silhouetted against the clear sky, but I looked at her with feelings of distaste. I had noticed the day before something tense, something not quite natural in her. . . . "She wants to make an impression on us," I thought. "Why does she do it? What a childish trick!" As if guessing my thoughts, she suddenly cast a rapid searching look at me, again laughed, bounded from the wall in two jumps, and went up to the old woman, whom she asked to give her a glass of water.

"Do you think it's because I'm thirsty?" she said, addressing her brother. "No—there are some flowers growing on the wall which simply must be watered."

Gagin paid no attention to what she said. Holding the glass in her hand, she began climbing over the ruins, stopping here and there, bending over with an absurd air of importance as she poured out a drop or two of water, which shone brilliantly in the sun. Her movements were charming, but I still felt annoyed with her, though I could not help admiring her lightness and agility. At one extremely dangerous place she gave an affected scream, and then burst out laughing. . . . I was still more annoyed.

"Why, she climbs like a goat!" muttered the old woman, looking up from her stocking for a moment.

At last Asya, having poured out all the water, came down to us, swaying playfully. Her brows, nostrils and lips twitched with a kind of strange mockery, her dark eyes were narrowed half defiantly, half merrily.

"I know you consider my conduct improper," her face seemed to say, "but I don't care. I know you're admiring me really."

"Well done, Asya, well done!" said Gagin in an undertone.

She seemed suddenly ashamed and, lowering her long eye-lashes, sat down meekly beside us as if she felt guilty. For the first time I had a good look at her face, the most changeful face I ever saw. A few minutes later it turned quite pale and assumed an absorbed, almost sorrowful expression; the very features seemed to me to have grown bigger, more austere, simpler. She seemed to be plunged in a profound stillness. We went all round the ruins (Asya following at our heels), admiring the view. The dinner-hour was approaching. Gagin paid the old woman, ordered another mug of beer and turned to me, exclaiming with a knowing look:

"To the health of the lady of your heart!"

"Has he—have you really such a lady?" asked Asya abruptly.

"Who hasn't?" parried Gagin.

Asya thought for a moment; her face changed again, and once more her expression became one of defiant, almost insolent mockery.

On the way back she laughed and gambolled with still greater abandon. She broke off a long branch, laid it across her shoulder like a gun, and tied the scarf round her head. I remember we encountered a large English family, fair-haired and conventional. Each of its members, as if at a command, turned stares of icy, glassy astonishment upon Asya, and she, as if to spite them, broke out into a song. As soon as we got home she went to her room, and only reappeared when dinner was served, dressed in her best frock, her hair neatly brushed, her waist pulled in, gloves on her hands. She bore herself soberly, almost conventionally at table, scarcely touching the food and sipping water from a wine-glass. She obviously wished to appear before me in a new role—that of a well-behaved, well-bred young lady. Gagin let her alone; I could see that he was in the habit of indulging all her whims. He only cast an occasional good-humoured glance at me, slightly raising one shoulder, as if to say: "She's a child—be kind!" The moment the meal was over, Asya rose, dropped a little curtsey and, putting on her hat, asked Gagin if she might go and see Frau Luise.

"Since when have you begun asking my permission?" he replied with his invariable smile, which seemed this time to have a shade of embarrassment in it. "Are you so bored in our company?"

"Not at all, but I promised Frau Luise yesterday that I would go and see her; besides, I thought you'd be happier by yourselves. Mr. N." (she pointed to me) "can tell you something else."

She left us.

"Frau Luise," began Gagín, avoiding my glance, "is the widow of a former burgomaster, a worthy but empty-headed old lady. She has taken a great fancy to Asya. Asya has a passion for getting to know people in a lower walk of life; I have observed that this sort of thing always springs from pride. She's certainly a bit spoilt, as you will have noticed," he added after a moment's silence. "But what's to be done about it? I have never been able to be strict with anyone—still less with her; I am *bound* to be indulgent to her."

I said nothing, and Gagín changed the subject. The more I saw of him, the more I liked him. I soon summed him up. His was a true Russian nature, veracious, honest, single-minded, but regrettably languid and lacking in tenacity and fire. Youth did not bubble up in him, it merely shed a quiet light. He had charm and intelligence, but I could not imagine what he would be like when he came to full maturity. Would he be an artist? To be an artist requires incessant, grinding toil . . . and toil, thought I, looking at his indeterminate features, listening to his slow speech, is just what you will not do, you will never be able to force yourself. But it was impossible not to like him, one's whole heart went out towards him. We spent something like three or four hours together, alternately sitting on the sofa and strolling slowly up and down in front of the house, and during these four hours we became firm friends.

The sun had set and it was time for me to go. Asya had not yet come back.

"What a self-willed thing she is!" exclaimed Gagín. "Shall I see you home? We could look in at Frau Luise's on the way and find out if Asya's there. It's not much out of your way."

We descended towards the town and turned into a narrow, crooked side-street, where we stopped at a four-

storey house, only two windows wide. The second storey jutted into the street over the ground-floor, the third and fourth, jutted out over the second. Its crumbling stonework, the two thick pillars supporting the upper storeys, the steep tiled roof and beak-like projection over the attics, made it look like a huge, crouching bird.

"Asya!" called Gagin. "Are you there?"

We heard the window of a lighted room in the third storey opened and saw Asya's small dark head. From behind her peered the toothless, blear-eyed countenance of an elderly German woman.

"Here I am!" cried Asya, leaning her elbows coquetishly on the window-sill. "I'm quite happy. Here, catch it!" she added, throwing a sprig of geranium to Gagin. "Pretend I'm the lady of your heart."

Frau Luise laughed.

"N. is going home," said Gagin. "He wants to say good-bye to you."

"Does he?" said Asya. "In that case give *him* the flower, I won't be long."

She slammed the window and, no doubt, kissed Frau Luise. Gagin handed me the sprig silently. Silently I put it in my pocket, walked to the bank of the river and was ferried to the opposite side.

I remember that, as I was walking home, not thinking of anything in particular, but with a strange load at my heart, I was suddenly brought up short by a pungent smell, familiar to me but seldom met with in Germany. I stood still and saw a small bed of hemp by the side of the road. The steppe perfume instantly reminded me of my native land and aroused in my soul passionate nostalgia. I wanted to breathe Russian air, to tread Russian soil. "What am I doing here, why am I roaming about in a strange land, among strangers?" I exclaimed, and the dead weight at my heart suddenly turned into bitter, burning agitation. I arrived home in a mood very differ-

ent from that of the previous day, in a state of something like anger, which I was unable to shake off for some time. I was gnawed by feelings of vexation which were incomprehensible to myself. At last I sat down to think about my fickle widow (every day ended in solemn recollections of this lady) and got out one of her letters. But I did not even open it, for my thoughts instantly took another turn. I began thinking about . . . Asya. It came into my mind that Gagin, in the course of conversation, had hinted at some obstacle to his returning to Russia. . . . "Come now, is she really his sister?" I said loudly.

I undressed, got into bed and tried to go to sleep; but an hour later I sat up in bed again, my elbow thrust into the pillow, and once more gave myself up to thoughts of this "capricious girl with the forced laughter. . . ." ". . . Her figure is like the little Raphael Galatea in the Farnesina frescoes," I whispered. "And I'm sure she isn't his sister. . . ."

And the widow's letter lay quietly on the floor, white in the moonbeams.

The next morning I again ferried over to L. I told myself that I wanted to see Gagin, but I was secretly longing to see how Asya would behave, whether she would be up to her tricks again as on the previous day. I found them both in the sitting-room, and, strange to say—perhaps because I had been thinking so much about Russia that night and in the morning—Asya looked to me like a typical Russian girl, yes, just an ordinary girl, almost like a housemaid. In an old frock, her hair brushed behind her ears, she sat quite still at the window, working at an embroidery-frame as modestly and quietly as if she had never done anything else in her life. She hardly spoke and kept her eyes on her work, and her features

assumed such an ordinary, prosaic expression that I could not help remembering our Katyas and Mashas at home. To complete the resemblance, she began humming: "Mother, dear mother!" Glancing at her sallow, now spiritless face, I thought of my dreams of yesterday and felt a regret for I knew not what. It was a glorious day. Gagin announced that he was going out sketching. I asked him if I might accompany him, or if I would be in the way.

"On the contrary," he replied. "You can give me good advice."

Putting on a round Van Dyck hat and a smock, he tucked his portfolio under his arm and went out, I following at his heels. Asya stayed at home. Before he left, Gagin charged her to see that the soup was not too thin. She promised to visit the kitchen. When Gagin reached the valley, now familiar to me, he seated himself on a rock and began to draw an old, hollow oak-tree with spreading branches. I lay on the grass and took a book out of my pocket. But I read no more than a couple of pages, and all he did was to spoil his sheet of paper. We chiefly talked, discussing, as far as I can judge, rather wisely and discerningly, the right way to work, what to avoid, what system to adopt, and the significance of the artist in our age. Gagin at last decided that he was "not in good form" today, and lay down beside me, and then our youthful discourse flowed freely, and we gave ourselves up to one of those discussions, by turns ardent, thoughtful and ecstatic, but almost invariably vague, so dear to the Russian heart. We returned home, having chattered to our heart's content, with a feeling of satisfaction, as if we had accomplished something successfully. I found Asya exactly the same as she had been when I left her. Closely as I observed her, I could now find no trace of coquetry, no sign of playing a part. This time no one could have accused her of affectation.

"Ah," said Gagin, "she is in sackcloth and ashes."

Towards evening she yawned several times unaffectedly and retired early to her room. I myself soon took leave of Gagin and went home, no longer indulging in dreams—it had been a day of sober sensations. While getting into bed, however, I remember I exclaimed involuntarily: "What a chameleon that girl is!" adding after a pause: "Just the same I'm sure she isn't his sister!"

VI

Two whole weeks passed during which I went to the Gugins every day. Asya seemed to avoid me, but no longer indulged in any of the freakish whims which had surprised me so much in the first two days of our acquaintance. She seemed to be secretly grieved or embarrassed, she even laughed less. I observed her with curiosity.

She spoke both French and German quite well, but everything about her showed that no feminine hand had guided her through the years of childhood, and that what education she had received had been strange and unusual—altogether different from that of Gagin himself. Despite the Van Dyck hat and artist's smock he exuded the mild atmosphere of a pampered Russian gentleman, whereas she was not at all like a young lady. Her movements were restless; this wilding had not long been grafted, this wine was still in a state of ferment. By nature bashful and timid, she was vexed at her own shyness and tried hard to be bold and independent, but the effect was not very successful. More than once I tried to get her to speak about her life in Russia, her past, but she always answered my questions reluctantly. I did, however, learn that she had lived for a long time in the country before going abroad. One day I found her alone, bending over a book. Her head supported on her hands,

the fingers thrust into her hair, she was devouring the printed page. "Bravo!" I said, going up to her. "How industrious you are!"

She raised her head and looked at me with solemn austerity.

"You think I can do nothing but laugh," she said, and made as if to go away.

I glanced at the title of her book—it was some French novel.

"I'm afraid I cannot applaud your choice," I remarked.

"What shall I read, then?" she cried, flinging the book down on the table, and adding: "I'd much better go out and have some fun." And she ran into the garden.

In the evening I read aloud *Hermann and Dorothea* to Gagin. At first Asya kept brushing past us, but a little later she came to a stop with her head on one side and sat down quietly beside me, listening till the reading was over. The next day, once again I did not know her, until I guessed what she had taken into her head—to be staid and housewifely like Dorothea. In a word, she was an enigma for me. She was excessively touchy and sensitive, but she attracted me even when she made me angry. Of one thing I became surer every day, and that was that she was not Gagin's sister. He did not treat her in a brotherly way—he was too affectionate, too indulgent, and at the same time he seemed to be under a slight strain in her company.

A strange occurrence seemed to confirm my suspicion.

One evening, arriving at the vineyard in which the Gagins lived, I found the gate locked. I lost no time wondering why this was, and made straight for a gap in the wall I had noticed before, and jumped across it. Not far from this place, a little way from the path, there was a small arbour formed from acacia-bushes. I reached it and was just going to go on, when, much to my surprise, I heard Asya say with tearful intensity:

"I don't want to love anyone but you—no, no, I only want to love you—to love you forever!"

"Come now, Asya, calm yourself!" said Gagin. "You know I believe you."

Their voices came from the arbour. I could see them both through the loose network of branches. They did not notice me.

"You, only you!" she repeated, throwing herself on his breast and sobbing convulsively, kissing him the while and pressing closer against him.

"There, there!" he repeated, passing his hand lightly over her hair.

I stood motionless for a moment or two. . . . Then I gave myself a shake. "Go to them? Not for the world!" flashed through my mind. I went back to the wall with rapid strides, jumped over it on to the road, and almost ran home. I smiled and rubbed my hands, marvelling at the incident so unexpectedly corroborating my guesses (I did not for a single moment question their correctness), and at the same time there was bitterness in my heart. They certainly know how to dissemble! But why? Why should they want to fool me? I never expected it of him. . . . And what touching avowals!

VII

I got up early the next morning after a bad night, shouldered my rucksack, told my landlady not to expect me till the evening, and climbed up into the mountains, following the bed of the river on which the town of Z. is situated. These mountains form a part of the range known as Dog's Back (*Hundsrück*), and are very interesting from a geological point of view. Particularly noteworthy are the regularity and purity of the basalt strata, but I was little inclined for geological speculations. I did

not quite know what was going on within me, but one feeling was quite clear—I did not wish to see the Gugins any more. I assured myself that the only cause of my sudden dislike for them was anger at their duplicity. Who asked them to give themselves out as relatives? For the rest, I tried to dismiss all thought of them. I roamed about at my will, over hill and vale, rested in village taverns, where I conversed peacefully with hosts and guests, or stretched myself out on a flat, sun-warmed stone and watched the clouds float by, for the weather was marvellous. I spent three days not without a certain enjoyment in these occupations, though every now and then I felt a pang at my heart. The peaceful natural scenery of this part of the country was admirably suited to the tenor of my thoughts.

I yielded myself up wholly to chance sensations, to the impressions of the moment, succeeding one another quietly in my soul and forming, as it were, a single sensation, in which was merged everything I saw, felt, and heard during these three days—the faint smell of resin in the woods, the cries and tappings of woodpeckers, the incessant babbling of transparent brooks, with speckled trout on their sandy beds, the mildly undulating contours of the mountains, sombre crags, neat-villages, ancient, venerable churches and trees, storks in the meadows, cosy water-mills with busily revolving wheels, the friendly faces of the villagers, in their blue smocks and grey stockings, slow, creaking farm-waggons drawn by stout horses, or sometimes by cows, youthful, long-haired pilgrims on the well-kept roads, which were lined on either side with apple- and pear-trees. . . .

To this day I take pleasure in the recollection of all these impressions. Hail to you, humble patch of German soil, with your modest sufficiency, bearing all over you the stamp of industrious hands, of patient, unhurried labour. . . . Hail to you, peace to you!

I returned to my lodgings at the end of the third day. I forgot to say that, in my anger with the Gugins, I made an attempt to revive in my heart the image of the flinty-hearted widow—but my endeavours were unsuccessful. I remember once, while starting to muse on her, my eyes fell on a little peasant girl of some five summers, with a round face and innocent, staring eyes. She looked at me with infantile simplicity. . . . Her clear gaze made me feel ashamed, I could not lie in her presence, and from that moment I abandoned the former object of my affections for good and all.

I found a note from Gugin awaiting me at home. He expressed his astonishment at the suddenness of my decision, scolded me for not taking him with me, and asked me to come and see them as soon as I got back. I read this note with displeasure, but went over to L. the next day.

VIII

Gugin received me cordially, showering affectionate reproaches on me, but Asya burst into causeless laughter the moment she saw me and, as usual, ran away instantly. Gugin was embarrassed and, muttering that she must be mad, begged me to forgive her. I admit I was extremely irate with Asya. I felt ill at ease as it was, and this affected laughter, these odd whims did not improve my spirits. I tried, however, to look as if I noticed nothing, and began telling Gugin all about my short excursion. And he told me what he had been doing in my absence. But the conversation hung fire. Asya came into the room again, and again ran out, and at last I announced that I had urgent work to do and that it was time for me to go home. At first Gugin tried to keep me, but after taking a steady look at me he said he

would see me home. In the hall Asya suddenly came up and held out her hand to me; I just touched the tips of her fingers and bowed ever so slightly. Gagin and I ferried over the Rhine, and, passing my favourite ash-tree with the statue of the Madonna in its branches, we sat down on a bench to admire the view. And then a remarkable conversation took place between us.

At first we exchanged a few disconnected words, and then fell silent, gazing at the gleaming river.

"Tell me," said Gagin abruptly, with his usual smile, "what is your opinion of Asya? She must seem rather strange to you, I suppose."

"Why, yes," I replied in some surprise. I had not expected him to speak about her.

"You have to know her very well before judging her," he said. "She has a very good heart, but she is a mad-cap. She's hard to get on with. But she is not to be blamed, and if you knew her story. . . ."

"Her story?" I interrupted him. "I thought you said she was your. . . ."

Gagin glanced at me.

"Have you taken it into your head that she isn't my sister? Oh, yes," he continued, taking no notice of my confusion, "she's my sister all right, she is my father's daughter. Look here! I know I can trust you, and I will tell you all about it.

"My father was an extremely kind, wise, well-educated—and unfortunate man. He was no worse treated by fate than many others, but he was unable to endure the very first blow. He married young, for love; his wife, my mother, died very soon after the marriage, when I was only six months old. My father took me to the country and stayed there for twelve whole years. He looked after my education himself and would never have parted with me if his brother, my uncle, had not come to the country to see him. This uncle lived in Petersburg, where he held

quite an important post. He persuaded my father to put me in his charge, since nothing would induce the latter to give up country life. My uncle pointed out to him that it was not good for a boy of my age to live in complete solitude, that, under the influence of such a dismal and taciturn mentor as my father was, I was bound to fall behind boys of my own age, and even my disposition might suffer. My father held out against his brother's arguments for a long time, but yielded at last. I wept when taking leave of him; I loved him, though I had never seen him smile; but once in Petersburg, I soon forgot my dark and melancholy home. I was sent to an officers' training school, from which I went straight into a regiment of the Guards. I returned to the country every year for a week or two, and every year found my father sadder and sadder, more withdrawn, a shy recluse from too much meditation. He went to church every day and had almost lost the habit of speech. It was on one of these visits of mine (I was over twenty by then) that I saw a little black-eyed girl of about ten years old whom I had never before seen in the house. This was Asya. My father told me she was an orphan he had taken to shelter and nourish—these were his very words. I did not pay much attention to her; she was as shy and agile and silent as a little animal, and whenever I entered my father's favourite room, the vast, gloomy chamber in which my mother died, where candles had to be lit in the day-time, she would instantly hide behind his high-backed arm-chair or a bookcase. It so happened that my military duties prevented me from going to the country for three or four years after this visit. I received a brief letter from my father every month; he seldom mentioned Asya, and then only quite casually. He was now over fifty, but still looked like a young man. Imagine, therefore, my consternation when, all unsuspecting, I suddenly received a letter from the steward, informing me

that my father was mortally ill and begging me to come as soon as possible if I wished to see him before he died. I rushed off headlong and found my father alive, but at his last gasp. He was indescribably glad to see me, embraced me with his emaciated arms, gazed long into my eyes with a gaze half searching, half imploring, and, making me promise I would fulfil his last request, told his old serving man to bring Asya to him. The old man led her in—she could hardly stand and was trembling all over.

“‘There,’ said my father with an effort, ‘I bequeath to you my daughter—your sister. Yakov will tell you all,’ he added, indicating the old servant. Asya burst out sobbing and flung herself face down on the bed. . . . Half an hour later my father breathed his last.

“This is what I learned. Asya was the daughter of my father and my late mother’s maid, Tatyana. I can vividly remember this Tatyana, her tall, slender figure, her handsome, severe, clever face, her great dark eyes. She passed for a proud, inaccessible girl. As far as I could make out from the respectful reservations of Yakov, my father had taken up with her a few years after my mother’s death. Tatyana no longer lived in the big house at that time, but in the hut of her married sister, who looked after the cattle.

“My father was greatly attached to her and after my departure from the country wanted to marry her, but she would not consent to be his wife, despite his entreaties.

“‘The late Tatyana Vlasyevna,’ Yakov told me, standing at the door with his hands behind his back, ‘was a model of discretion and did not wish to injure your father. “What sort of a wife would I make you? I’m not a fine lady.” That is how she used to answer him. She used to say it in front of me.’ Tatyana would not even move to our house, but stayed on in her sister’s hut, with Asya. In my childhood I only saw Tatyana at church on saints’

days. She always stood among the crowd next to the window, a dark kerchief on her head, a russet-coloured shawl round her shoulders, her austere profile sharply outlined against the clear glass of the window, joining in the prayers with meek dignity and bowing almost to the ground in the old-fashioned manner. When my uncle took me away, Asya was only two years old, and when she was eight, she lost her mother.

"Immediately after the death of Tatyana, my father brought Asya to live in the big house. He had expressed a desire to have her with him before, but Tatyana would not allow this, either. Imagine what Asya must have gone through when she found herself in the big house! To this day she cannot forget the moment when she was clad in a silk dress for the first time and the servants came up to kiss her hand. Her mother had brought her up very strictly; in her father's house she enjoyed absolute freedom. He was her teacher; he was her sole companion. He did not spoil her, or at any rate he did not fondle her, but he loved her passionately and allowed her to do whatever she liked. In his heart he considered he had wronged her. Asya quickly understood that she was the most important person in the house, she knew the master was her father; but she understood no less quickly the falseness of her position. She developed an inordinate conceit and a no less inordinate diffidence. Bad habits took root in her, simplicity vanished. She once admitted to me that it was her dream to make *the whole world* forget her origin; she was at one and the same time ashamed of her mother, ashamed of her own shame, and proud of her.

"She has seen and heard a great deal that is unsuitable for her years, you see. . . . But is that her fault? She was carried away by her youthful spirits, the young blood pulsed in her veins. And there was no hand to guide her. Complete independence in every way! No light burden,

that! She was determined to be as good as other young ladies; she threw herself eagerly into reading. What good could come of all this? Her life, wrong from the outset, developed all wrong, too, but her heart was not corrupted, her mind unspoilt.

"And here was I, a young man in my twenties, left with a girl of thirteen on my hands! During the first few days after my father's death the very sound of my voice was enough to send her into a fever, my caresses made her miserable, and it took some time for her to get used to me. True, later, when she realized that I actually regarded her as my sister and was attached to her as a brother, she became passionately fond of me—there are no half-measures about her feelings.

"I took her to Petersburg. Painful as it was for me to part with her, it was quite impossible to keep her with me, and I placed her in one of the best boarding-schools. Asya admitted the necessity of our separation, though she began this period of her life by an illness which almost proved fatal. But she gradually accustomed herself to the boarding-school, in which she stayed four years. Contrary to my expectations, however, she came out of it quite unchanged. The head of the school was always complaining of her. 'There's no punishing her,' she said, 'and she does not respond to affection.' Asya was exceedingly bright, and an excellent pupil, the best of them all, but nothing would induce her to conform, she was obstinate and sulky.... I could not find it in my heart to blame her, in her situation she had no choice between cringing and rebellion. Of all her companions, the only one with whom she made friends was a poor, plain, downtrodden girl. The young ladies with whom she was brought up, most of them from good families, did not like her, and wounded and affronted her to the best of their ability; Asya never yielded an iota to them. Once, when the Scripture teacher spoke of vices, Asya

remarked in a loud voice: 'Flattery and cowardice are the worst vices.' In a word, she continued in the way she had begun. The only thing she improved in was manners, and even here she does not seem to have made much progress.

"At last her seventeenth birthday came round, and she could no longer stay at the boarding-school. I was in a somewhat difficult position. Suddenly I had the happy thought of retiring from the service and going abroad for a year or two, taking Asya with me. This idea was no sooner conceived than carried out, and here we are, she and I, on the banks of the Rhine, where I am trying to occupy myself with art, and she . . . behaves as eccentrically and wildly as ever. I hope you will now judge of her more indulgently—you know, whatever she pretends, she does care for other people's opinion—especially yours."

And Gagin again smiled his quiet smile. I pressed his hand hard.

"That's all very well," he said, returning to the subject, "but I am having a hard time with her. She's a powder-magazine. So far she hasn't taken to anyone, but when she does fall in love! . . . Sometimes I wonder what will come of her. What d'you think she took into her head the other day? First she declares that I have turned cold to her, and then goes on to say she loves no one but me and will never love anyone else her whole life. . . . And how she cried. . . ."

"Oh, so that. . ." I began and checked myself instantly.

"Tell me," I asked (we were now talking quite frankly), "d'you mean to say she has never found anyone she could like up to now? She must have met young men in Petersburg."

"She didn't like them a bit. No—Asya must have a hero, a remarkable person—or else a picturesque shepherd in a mountain pass. But I've kept you, chattering on like this," he added, getting up.

"Look here," I said, "let's go back, I don't want to go home."

"And your work?"

I made no reply. Gagin smiled good-humouredly and we returned to L. When I saw the familiar vineyard and the little white house on the crest of the hill, I was conscious of a sensation of sweetness—yes, sweetness—within me, just as if honey were trickling into my heart. I felt much better since hearing Gagin's story.

IX

Asya met us right at the door; I was quite prepared for another burst of laughter, but she came towards us pale, silent, her eyes lowered.

"Here he is again," said Gagin, "and he offered to come himself, mark that!"

Asya looked at me questioningly. I myself now put out my hand to her and this time pressed her cold fingers heartily. I felt very sorry for her; I now understood much that had formerly puzzled me in her; her restlessness, her inability to behave properly, her desire to show off—all had become clear to me. I had seen into this soul—a secret urge drove her continually, her immature vanity gave her no peace, but she strove with all her being for truth. I realized what it was that had attracted me to this strange girl; it was not only the half-savage charm irradiating her slender form which had attracted me—it was her soul I loved.

Gagin began rummaging among his drawings; I proposed to Asya a stroll about the vineyard. She agreed at once, with gay, almost submissive readiness. When we were half-way down the slope we sat down on a great stone.

"And didn't you miss us a bit?" began Asya.

"Did you miss me?" I countered.

Asya cast a sidelong glance at me.

"Yes," she answered, and went on immediately: "Was it nice in the mountains? Are they very high? Higher than the clouds? Tell me what you saw. You told my brother, but I didn't hear anything."

"You chose to go away," I remarked.

"I went away . . . because. . . But I'm not going away now," she added confidently. "You were cross today, you know."

"I—cross!"

"Yes, you!"

"Why on earth should I have been cross?"

"I don't know, but you were cross when you came, and you went away cross. I was sorry you went away like that, and I'm ever so glad you came back."

"And I'm glad I came back," I said.

Asya shrugged her shoulders, the way children sometimes do when they are pleased.

"Oh, I can always tell what people are feeling," she went on. "I used to be able to tell, just from the way Papa coughed in the next room, whether he was pleased with me or not."

Up to this moment Asya had never once mentioned her father to me. Her doing so now affected me strongly.

"Did you love your father?" I asked and suddenly, to my intense mortification, felt that I was blushing.

She did not answer, and blushed too. We both remained silent. A steamer sped down the distant Rhine, trailing clouds of smoke. We watched it.

"Why don't you tell me about the mountains?" whispered Asya.

"What made you laugh the moment you saw me today?" I asked.

"I don't know myself. Sometimes I laugh when I really want to cry. You mustn't judge me by what I . . . do. Oh, by the way, how lovely the legend of the Lorelei is.

That's her rock over there, isn't it? They say she used to drown everyone at first, but when she fell in love she threw herself into the water. I like that story. Frau Luise tells me all sorts of fairy-tales. Frau Luise has a black cat with yellow eyes...."

Asya raised her head and shook back her curls.

"Oh, I'm so happy!" she said.

At that moment monotonous, staccato sounds reached our ears. A religious chant was being intoned at regular intervals by hundreds of voices—a crowd of pilgrims was moving along the road below with crosses and banners.

"I wish I could go with them," said Asya, straining her ears to catch the vanishing bursts of song.

"Why, are you so pious?"

"I should like to go somewhere far, far away, to pray, to achieve some difficult feat," she continued. "For the days pass and life goes on, and what have we ever done?"

"You are ambitious," I remarked. "You would like your life to pass not in vain, you want to leave traces behind you...."

"And do you think that is impossible?"

My lips were going to frame the word "impossible" ...but looking into her luminous eyes I only said: "Try."

"Tell me," said Asya after a short pause, while shadows chased one another across her face, which was again pale, "did you like that lady very much?... You know, the one my brother drank to in the ruins, the day after we first met."

I laughed.

"Your brother was joking, I've never liked any lady very much. There's nobody I like now, at any rate."

"And what do you like in women?" asked Asya, throwing back her head in her innocent curiosity.

"What a funny question!" I exclaimed.

Asya was a little embarrassed.

"I ought not to ask you such questions, ought I? Excuse me, I'm used to blurting out the first thing that comes into my head. That's why I'm afraid of talking."

"Talk away, for goodness' sake, don't be afraid," I said. "I'm so glad you've got over your shyness at last."

Asya lowered her eyes and gave a low, short laugh. I had never heard her laugh like that before.

"Go on," she pleaded, smoothing her skirt over her legs as if she meant to settle down for a long time. "Talk to me, or recite something, the way you read Pushkin to us that time. . . ."

She stopped speaking, and then said, under her breath:

*Where is the cross, the shadow of the boughs,
Above the grave of my unhappy mother!*

"That's not how Pushkin wrote it," I remarked.

"I should like to have been Tatyana," she went on, as pensively as before. "But do go on!" she exclaimed with sudden animation.

But I was in no mood for talking. I looked at her, lit up in the rays of the sun, calm, docile. All around was radiant—below us, above us—the sky, the earth, the water. The very air seemed to be saturated with brilliance.

"See how beautiful everything is!" I said, involuntarily lowering my voice.

"Beautiful!" she replied, also lowering her voice, and not looking at me. "If we were birds, how we would soar, how we would fly. . . . How we would plunge into all that blueness. . . . But we are not birds."

"We might grow wings," I said.

"How?"

"Live and learn. There are feelings which raise us

above the earth. Don't worry, you'll have wings one day yourself."

"Have you ever had them?"

"Well, it's hard to say. . . . I don't think I've ever flown yet."

Asya was silent again. I bent slightly over her.

"Can you waltz?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, I can," I replied, somewhat puzzled.

"Come on, then, come on! I'll ask my brother to play a waltz for us. . . . We'll pretend we're flying, we'll pretend we have wings."

She ran back to the house. I ran after her, and a few minutes later we were circling the cramped sitting-room to the sweet sounds of a Lanner waltz. Asya waltzed beautifully, with enthusiasm. Something soft and feminine suddenly showed itself through the virginal austerity of her appearance. My hand retained the sensation of contact with her slender waist for a long time, and it was long before I could forget the sound of her rapid breathing so near me, the dark, still, half-closed eyes in the pale face, so vivid in its frame of curls.

X

The whole of that day passed in the happiest possible manner. We frolicked like children. Asya was very sweet and simple. Gagin was glad to see her like this. It was quite late when I left them. When the boat was in mid-stream I asked the ferryman to let it drift on the current. The old man stopped rowing, and the majestic river bore us on its bosom. I looked round, listening and remembering, and I suddenly felt a secret anxiety at my heart. . . . I looked up at the sky—but even in the sky there was no peace; studded with stars, it was in constant motion and palpitation. I leaned over the water . . .

but here, too, in the dark cold depths, the stars shimmered and quivered. I could feel everywhere a kind of restless anxiety, and anxiety grew in myself, too. I leaned on the rim of the boat. . . . The whispering of the breeze in my ears, the soft gurgling of the water round the stern, troubled and stirred me, and the freshness rising from the waves did not cool me. A nightingale on the shore distilled in my veins the sweet poison of its song. Tears welled up in my eyes, but they were not tears of vague ecstasy. What I was now feeling was no longer the mere sensation of all-embracing desire, causing the soul to expand, to sing, to feel that there is love and understanding in it for the whole of creation. . . . No, it was the thirst for happiness that was now consuming me. I did not venture as yet to give it a name, but what I desired was happiness, overflowing happiness. . . . And the boat floated on, the old ferryman bending dreamily over the oars.

XI

As I set off the next day for the Gugins', I did not ask myself if I was in love with Asya. But I thought about her a great deal, her fate interested me keenly, I was glad we had at last drawn nearer to one another. I felt I had only begun to know her since the day before—up till then she had always turned away from me. And now that she had at last opened out to me, what an entrancing light irradiated my image of her, how new this image was for me, what secret bashful charms were latent in its depths!

I strode briskly up the familiar path, keeping my gaze fixed on the little house from the moment it appeared—a mere blur of white in the distance. Far from thinking about the future, I did not even think about the morrow—I was perfectly content.

Asya blushed when I came into the room; I noticed that she was again smartly attired, but her expression did not match her attire—it was melancholy. And I had come in such good spirits! I even thought I could discern that she had just been going to run away as usual, but had made an effort of will—and remained. Gagin was in one of those fits of frenzied artistic ecstasy which suddenly descend upon amateurs, when they fancy that they have contrived, as they express it, to “catch nature by the tail.” He stood before his canvas, dishevelled and paint-stained, and nodded to me almost savagely, with a sweeping flourish of the paint-brush over its surface, stepped back, narrowed his eyes, and once more fell upon the picture he was at work on. I refrained from disturbing him and sat down beside Asya. Her dark eyes turned slowly towards me.

“You’re not the same as you were yesterday,” I said after vain attempts to bring a smile to her lips.

“No, I’m not,” she answered slowly, in hollow tones. “It doesn’t matter, though. I slept badly, I lay awake all night, thinking.”

“What about?”

“Oh, about all sorts of things. It’s been a habit of mine ever since I was a child, ever since the time I lived with my mother. . . .”

She brought out the last word with an effort, and forced herself to repeat:

“Ever since the time I lived with my mother. . . I used to wonder why nobody ever knew what was going to happen; and why you sometimes saw misfortune coming but could not prevent it; and why you could never tell the whole truth. . . . And then I thought to myself—I know nothing, I must learn. I need to be educated all over again, I have been very badly brought up. I can’t play the piano, I can’t draw, I can’t even sew properly. I have no gifts, I must be very poor company.”

"You are not being fair to yourself," I told her. "You've read a lot, you're well-educated, and with your brains. . . ."

"D'you think I'm clever?" she asked with such naive curiosity that I could not help laughing, but she did not even smile. "Brother, am I clever?" she asked, addressing Gagin.

He did not answer, but went on with his work, incessantly changing his brushes and raising his hand high in the air.

"Sometimes I don't know myself what there is in my head," continued Asya, with the same pensive look. "Sometimes I'm afraid of myself—really I am! I wish. . . . Is it true that women ought not to read much?"

"Not too much, of course, but. . . ."

"Tell me what I ought to read, tell me what I ought to do. I'll do everything you tell me," she added, turning to me with naive confidence.

I could not at once find what to answer her.

"You won't be bored with me?"

"Of course I won't. . . ." I began.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" she cried. "I was afraid you might be."

And her small, hot hand pressed mine firmly.

"N.!" called out Gagin at that moment, "don't you think the background is too dark?"

I went over to him. Asya got up and went out of the room.

XII

She returned an hour later and stood in the doorway, beckoning to me.

"Tell me," she said, "if I died, would you be sorry?"

"What strange thoughts come into your head today!"

"I keep thinking I shall soon be dead; sometimes it

seems to me as if everyone was saying good-bye to me. Better die than live like this. . . . You needn't look at me that way—I'm not pretending, truly, I'm not! I'll be afraid of you again if you do!"

"Were you really afraid of me?"

"It's not my fault I'm so queer," she continued. "Look, I can't even laugh any more. . . ."

She remained mournful and preoccupied all day. Something was going on within her which I could not understand. Her gaze rested frequently on me; my heart seemed to contract ever so slightly beneath this enigmatic gaze. Though she appeared perfectly calm, I felt continually impelled to beg her not to be agitated. Watching her, I found a pathetic charm in her face, now so pale, in her irresolute, slow movements; and she, for some reason or other, came to the conclusion that I was out of spirits.

"D'you know what?" she said, a short time before I took my leave. "I can't help being worried by the thought that you consider me frivolous. . . . Promise me you will always believe everything I say—and *you* must be frank with me, too. And I'll always tell the truth, honestly I will. . . ."

Her "honestly" made me laugh again.

"Don't laugh!" she said eagerly. "Or I'll ask you today what you asked me yesterday: 'Why are you laughing?'" And she added after a pause: "Do you remember what you said about wings yesterday? My wings have grown, but there's nowhere to fly to. . . ."

"Come, now!" I said. "The whole world is open to you. . . ."

Asya looked me straight in the eyes.

"You're displeased with me today," she said, frowning.

"I? Displeased with you?"

"Why are you two so glum?" interrupted Gagin, addressing me. "Shall I play you a waltz, like yesterday?"

"No! No!" cried Asya, doubling up her fists. "Not today—not for the world..."

"Nobody's forcing you—don't get excited..."

"Not for the world!" she repeated, turning pale.

"Can it be that she loves me?" I wondered, as I approached the swift-rolling Rhine.

XIII

"Can it be that she loves me?" I asked myself the next day, the moment I waked up. I had no desire to look into my own heart. I felt that her image, the image of "the girl with the affected laugh," was engraved on my heart, and that it would not be easy to get rid of it. I went to L. and stayed there the whole day; but I only saw Asya for a moment. She was unwell, her head ached. She came downstairs for a moment, a bandage over her forehead, pale, thin, her eyes almost closed. Smiling faintly, she said: "It'll pass, it's nothing. Everything passes, doesn't it?" and went out of the room. I fell into a mood of dejection, mingled with a kind of hollow melancholy. But I could not bring myself to leave, and it was late when I at last took my departure, without having seen her again.

The next morning passed in a kind of trance. I tried to take up some work, but could not. I tried to do nothing and think about nothing... but that was no good, either. I roamed about the town, went home again, and again went out.

"Are you Mr. N.?" cried a childish voice suddenly. I looked round—a small boy stood before me. "This is from Fräulein Annette," he said, handing me a note.

Opening it, I recognized Asya's swift, irregular handwriting. "I *must* see you," she wrote. "Be at the stone

chapel on the road, near the ruins, at four today. I have done something very rash today.... For God's sake, come, you will know all.... Tell the messenger: 'Yes.' "

"Any answer?" the boy asked.

"Say—'yes,' " I told him. The boy ran off.

XIV

Going back to my room, I sat down and gave myself up to my thoughts. My heart was beating violently. I read Asya's note again and again. I looked at the clock—it was not yet twelve.

The door opened and Gagin came in.

His face was sombre. He seized my hand and pressed it firmly. He seemed to be greatly agitated.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

He moved a chair and sat down opposite me. "Four days ago," he said with a forced smile, stammering slightly, "I told you a story which surprised you. Today I am going to surprise you still more. I wouldn't dare to be so—frank—if it was anyone but you. But you are a gentleman, you are my friend, aren't you? Now listen to me—Asya, my sister, is in love with you."

I started violently and half rose in my chair....

"Your sister, you say...."

"Yes, yes," he interrupted me. "She's mad, I tell you, and she will drive me mad. But luckily she is unable to lie—and she trusts me. What a heart that girl has! But she'll ruin herself, I know she will...."

"You must be mistaken," I said.

"Not a bit of it. Yesterday, as you know, she lay down almost all day and would not eat, but she did not complain ... she never complains. I did not worry, though she became a little feverish towards evening. At two o'clock in the morning our landlady woke me up—"Come

to your sister,' she said, 'she's in a bad way.' I hurried to Asya and found her not undressed, feverish, in tears. Her forehead was burning, her teeth chattered. 'What's the matter?' I asked. 'Are you ill?' She threw her arms round my neck, imploring me to take her away as soon as possible if I did not want her to die. . . . I couldn't understand a thing, and tried to calm her. . . . Her sobbing became still more violent . . . and suddenly, through her sobs, I . . . in a word, I heard her say she was in love with you. I assure you, rational folk like you and me can have no idea of the depths of her emotions and of the violent form these emotions take with her. They overwhelm her as suddenly and irresistibly as a thunderstorm. Of course I can see you are very attractive," went on Gagín, "but why she should have fallen in love with you like this, I confess is beyond me. She says she took to you at first sight. That's why she cried the other day when she assured me she wanted to love no one but me. She has taken it into her head that you despise her, that you probably know all about her. She asked me if I had told you her story. I told her I hadn't, of course. But her intuition is something terrifying. She only wants one thing—to go away, to go away this very minute. I sat with her till the morning. She made me swear that we would be gone by tomorrow, and only then she slept. I thought and thought and decided to speak to you. I consider Asya is right. The best thing is for us both to leave this place. I would have taken her today if an idea had not come into my head which prevented me. Perhaps . . . after all . . . you like my sister? If so, then why should I take her away? And so I decided, discarding all shame. . . . Besides, I've noticed something myself. . . . I decided . . . to ask you. . . ." Poor Gagín broke off in confusion. "Forgive me," he said, "I've never been in such a strait before."

I took his hand.

"You want to know," I said in firm tones, "if I like your sister? I do like her...."

Gagin glanced at me. "But," he stammered, "you don't want to marry her, do you?"

"Now how do you expect me to answer a question like that? Ask yourself if I could now...."

"I know, I know!" he interrupted me. "I have no right whatever to demand a reply, and my question was the height of indelicacy.... But what am I to do? You can't trifle with her. You don't know Asya—she's capable of falling ill, of running away, of making a rendezvous with you.... Another girl would be able to conceal everything and wait—but not she. It's the first time it ever happened to her—that's the trouble. If you had seen her today, sobbing at my feet, you would understand my fears."

I pondered. Gagin's words "a rendezvous with you" stabbed me to the heart. It seemed unworthy not to answer his frankness with equal frankness.

"Yes," I said at last. "You are right. An hour ago I received a letter from your sister. Here it is."

Gagin seized the note, ran his eyes rapidly over it, and let his hands fall on to his knees. The expression of astonishment on his face was extremely comic, but I was in no mood for laughing.

"I said you were an honourable man, and I say it again," he told me, "but what's to be done now? What? She wants to go away, and she writes to you, reproaching herself for rashness.... And when did she find time to write? What does she want of you?"

I calmed him and we began discussing as coolly as we could what was to be done.

And this is the decision we at last came to: in order to avert catastrophe, I was to go to the rendezvous and have a frank talk with Asya. Gagin undertook to stay at home and give no sign that he knew about her letter. And in the evening we were to meet again.

"I count on you," said Gagin, squeezing my hand. "Be merciful to her—and to me. We'll go away tomorrow anyhow," he added, getting up, "because you're not going to marry Asya, are you?"

"Give me till the evening," I said.

"Very well—but you won't marry her."

He went away and I flung myself on the sofa and closed my eyes. My head was spinning, the multitude of new ideas forced upon it had set my brain in a whirl. I was vexed with Gagin for his frankness, I was vexed with Asya, too, whose love at the same time gratified and embarrassed me. I could not understand what had made her tell her brother everything; the necessity to come to a rapid, almost instantaneous decision was agonizing. . . .

"Marry a seventeen-year-old girl with a temper like hers?" I said, rising from the sofa. "How can I?"

XV

I ferried over the Rhine at the appointed hour, and the first person I met on the opposite bank was the same little boy who had come to me in the morning. He had apparently been waiting for me.

"From Fräulein Annette," he whispered and handed me another note.

Asya informed me of a change in the place of our rendezvous. I was to go in an hour and a half, not to the chapel, but to Frau Luise's house, where I must knock at the street-door and go up to the third floor.

"Again—'yes'?" the boy asked me.

"Yes," I repeated and walked off along the bank of the Rhine. There was not time enough to go home, and I did not wish to roam the streets. Beyond the walls of the town was a little park with a covered bowling-alley

and tables for beer-drinkers. I went there. A few middle-aged Germans were playing skittles; the wooden balls rolled noisily, and every now and then cries of admiration were heard. A pretty waitress with eyes red from crying brought me a mug of beer—I looked into her face. She turned away quickly and left me.

"Yes, yes," said a stout, red-cheeked townsman sitting next to me, "our Hannchen is very unhappy today—her sweetheart has gone for a soldier." I looked at her—she had stolen into a corner and stood there, her cheek supported on one fist; tears dripped through her fingers, one at a time. Someone called for beer; she brought him a mug and went straight back to her place. Her sorrow had its effect on me; I began thinking of the meeting in store for me, but my thoughts were grave and anxious. I looked forward to this meeting with a heavy heart; it was not to yield to the delights of mutual love that I was going, but to keep my word, to fulfil an onerous duty. "You can't trifle with her"—Gagin's words had penetrated my heart like the barb of an arrow. And only four days ago, drifting with the current in the ferry-boat, had I not been filled with a yearning for happiness? Now this happiness was possible, and I hesitated, I pushed it from me, I was compelled to push it from me. . . . Its suddenness had thrown me into confusion. And Asya herself, this attractive but strange being, so hot-headed, saddled with such a past, such an upbringing—I admit, she frightened me. Conflicting feelings contended long within me for supremacy. The appointed hour drew near. "I cannot marry her," I decided at last. "She shall not know that I love her, too."

I got up and, putting a thaler into poor Hannchen's hand (she did not even thank me), set off for the house of Frau Luise. The shadows of evening were already falling, and the narrow strip of sky above the dark street was crimson in the reflected glow of the sunset. I

knocked softly on the door, which opened immediately. I crossed the threshold and found myself in utter darkness.

"This way," said an old woman's voice. "You are expected."

I took a step or two in the direction of the voice, and a bony hand grasped mine.

"Is it you, Frau Luise?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the same voice. "Yes, my fine young man, it is I." The old lady led me up a steep staircase and stopped at a landing on the third floor. By the faint light filtering through a tiny window I could see the wrinkled countenance of the burgomaster's widow. Stretching her sunken lips in a honeyed smile and screwing up her bleary eyes, she pointed to a small door. I opened it with an unsteady hand and let it slam behind me.

XVI

It was rather dark in the small room in which I now found myself, and I did not see Asya at once. She was seated in a chair at the window, her head turned away and almost concealed by the huge shawl wrapped round her, and she looked like a frightened bird. She was breathing fast and trembling all over. I felt an indescribable pity for her. I went up to her. She turned her head still further away. . . .

"Anna Nikolayevna," I said.

She straightened herself and tried to look at me—but could not. I seized her hand; it was very cold and lay lifeless in my palm.

"I meant," she began, and she tried to smile, but her pale lips refused to obey her. "I meant. . . . No, I can't!" she exclaimed, and said no more. And indeed her voice had failed her at every word.

I sat down beside her.

"Anna Nikolayevna," I said again, and I, too, could not go on.

A silence ensued. I sat there holding her hand and looking at her. She was huddled up in the shawl, breathing with difficulty and biting her lower lip in order not to cry, in order to keep back her rising tears. I looked at her—her timid stillness was pathetically helpless, as if in her exhaustion she had only just managed to reach a chair and had fallen into it. My heart melted.

"Asya," I said almost inaudibly. . . .

She slowly raised her eyes to my face. . . . Oh, a woman's glance when she loves! Who shall describe it? They implored, those eyes, they trusted, they questioned, they yielded. . . . I could not withstand their charm. Thin flames tingled like needles in my veins—I bent over and pressed my lips to her hand. An agitated sound—something like a quivering sigh—came to my ears, and I felt a light touch, a hand trembling like a leaf, on my hair. I raised my head and saw her face. How transformed it was, all of a sudden! The expression of fear had vanished from it, the gaze seemed to have retreated deep within her, drawing me after it, the lips were slightly parted, the brow as pale as marble, and the curls thrown back as if tossed by the wind. I forgot all, I drew her to me, her hand submitted meekly, her whole body followed the hand, the shawl slipped from her shoulders, and her head lay quietly on my breast, resting beneath my burning lips. . . .

"Yours," she whispered almost inaudibly.

My hands slipped down to her waist. . . . But suddenly the memory of Gagin flashed over me like lightning. "What are we doing?" I cried, and started back. "Your brother . . . he knows all. He knows that I am seeing you. . . ."

Asya sank back on to the chair.

"Yes," I continued, getting up and going over to the far corner of the room. "Your brother knows all. . . . I was obliged to tell him all. . . ."

"Obliged?" she repeated indistinctly. It was obvious that she had not yet been able to come to her senses and could scarcely understand what I said.

"Yes," I said with inexplicable vehemence. "And it's all your fault! Why did you have to give yourself away? Who made you tell your brother everything? He came to me today himself and told me what you had said to him." I tried not to look at Asya and began striding up and down the room. "Everything is spoilt now, everything!"

Asya made as if to rise from her chair.

"Sit down," I cried. "Sit down, please. You are dealing with an honourable man—yes, an honourable man. Tell me, for God's sake, what it was that upset you so? Did you notice any change in me? When your brother came to see me today, I could not conceal the truth from him."

"What am I saying?" I asked myself, and the thought that I was a callous deceiver, that Gagin knew about our meeting, that everything had been distorted, exposed, made my brain reel.

"I didn't send for my brother," came in Asya's terrified whisper. "He came himself."

"See what you have done!" I went on. "Now you want to go away. . . ."

"Yes, I must go," she said as softly as before. "That's why I asked you to come here, I wanted to say good-bye."

"And do you think," I said, "it is easy for me to part with you?"

"But why did you tell my brother?" asked Asya in puzzled tones.

"I tell you I could not do otherwise. If you hadn't given yourself away. . . ."

"I locked myself into my room," she said simply. "I did not know the landlady had another key."

This artless avowal from her lips at such a moment made me almost angry . . . and now I cannot think of it without being moved. Poor, honest, sincere child!

"And now everything is over," I began again. "Everything. Now we must part." I cast a furtive glance at Asya. She suddenly flushed. I realized that she had become ashamed and alarmed. I myself was moving and speaking in a kind of fever. "You wouldn't let the feeling, just beginning to unfold itself, mature, you have destroyed the ties between us yourself, you could not trust me, you doubted me. . . ."

While I was speaking, Asya bent further and further forward, till she suddenly fell on her knees, let her head drop into her hands, and sobbed. I rushed over to her and tried to raise her, but she resisted me. I cannot stand the sight of a woman's tears, it makes me lose my head completely.

"Anna Nikolayevna, Asya," I repeated. "I implore you, for God's sake, stop crying. . . ." Once again I took her by the hand. . . .

But to my great astonishment she suddenly leaped to her feet, rushed to the door with the rapidity of lightning, and disappeared.

When, a few minutes later, Frau Luise came into the room, I was still standing in the middle of the floor as if I had been struck by lightning. I could not understand how it was that this meeting had ended so quickly, so ineptly, when I had not expressed a hundredth part of what I had to say, what I ought to have said, when I did not even know yet what was to come of it. . . .

"Has Fräulein Annette gone?" asked Frau Luise, raising her sandy brows till they almost touched the edge of her toupee.

I looked at her blankly and went away.

XVII

I made my way out of the town and walked on till I got to open country. I was devoured by furious vexation. . . . I showered reproaches upon myself. How could I have failed to guess the cause which had impelled Asya to change the place of our meeting, to realize what it had cost her to go to this old woman? Why had I not prevented her from leaving me? Alone with her in that remote, almost dark room, I had found the strength, the courage, to repulse her, even to reproach her. . . . And now her image pursued me, I implored her forgiveness. The remembrance of that pale face, those moist, timid eyes, the hair hanging limp on her bent neck, the light touch of her head on my breast, seemed to burn me. "Yours. . ." I heard the whisper again. . . . "I obeyed the dictates of conscience," I assured myself. . . . But it was not true. Was this the consummation I had desired? Was I capable of parting with her? Could I endure to lose her? "Madness! Madness!" I repeated bitterly. . . .

In the meantime night was falling. I strode back to the house in which Asya lived.

XVIII

Gagin came out to me.

"Did you meet my sister?" he called from the distance.

"Isn't she at home?" I asked.

"No."

"Didn't she come back?"

"No. Forgive me," continued Gagin, "but I couldn't help it—contrary to our agreement, I went to the chapel. She wasn't there. I suppose she didn't come, then."

"She wasn't at the chapel."

"And you didn't meet her?"

I was forced to admit that I had met her.

"Where?"

"At Frau Luise's. I parted with her an hour ago," I added. "I was sure she had gone home."

"We'll wait," said Gagin.

We went into the house and sat down side by side. Neither spoke. We both felt exceedingly awkward. We kept looking up, glancing towards the door, straining our ears. At last Gagin rose.

"This is impossible!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what to do with myself. She'll be the death of me, really she will. . . . Let's go and look for her."

We went out. It was now quite dark.

"What did you talk about?" asked Gagin, pulling his hat over his brows.

"I was with her only five minutes," I said. "I told her what we agreed upon."

"I'll tell you what," he said, "we'd better separate. We're more likely to come on her. In any case come back here in an hour."

XIX

I ran down the slope leading from the vineyard and rushed back to the town. I rapidly made the rounds of all the streets, looked everywhere, even into Frau Luise's windows, returned to the bank of the Rhine and ran along it. . . . Every now and then I caught sight of a woman's figure, but Asya was nowhere to be seen. It was no longer vexation which devoured me, I was tormented by a secret fear, and it was not only fear which I felt—I now felt remorse, a burning regret, love—yes, the tenderest love! I wrung my hands, I called her name through the gathering darkness of the night, first under my breath, and then louder and louder. A hundred

times I repeated that I loved her, I vowed never more to part with her. I would have given everything in the world to hold her cold hand again, to hear her low voice again, to see her before me again. . . . She had been so near to me, she had come to me with full determination, with a heart full of innocence and feeling, she had brought me her untouched youth. . . . And I had not pressed her to my bosom, I had thrown away the bliss of seeing her sweet face brighten with the joy and silence of ecstasy. . . . This thought almost drove me mad.

"Where can she have gone? What can she have done with herself?" I cried in impotent despair. . . . Something white suddenly appeared on the very bank of the river. I knew this place; there, over the grave of a man who had drowned himself seventy years before, stood, half buried in the ground, a stone cross with an ancient inscription. My heart almost stopped. . . . I ran up to the cross—the white figure had disappeared. "Asya!" I shouted. The wild sound of my own voice frightened me—but no one answered. . . .

I decided to go and see if Gagin had found her. .

XX

As I rushed up the path through the vineyard, I saw a light in Asya's room. . . . This calmed me slightly.

I went up to the house; the front door was bolted. I knocked. An unlighted window in the lower floor was cautiously opened, and the head of Gagin appeared.

"Did you find her?" I asked.

"She's come back," he replied in a whisper. "She's in her room, undressing. Everything's all right."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed in unspeakable relief and joy. "Thank God! Now everything will be splendid. But we shall have to have another talk, you know."

"Another time," he said, drawing the window-pane gently towards him. "Another time. And now good-bye."

"Till tomorrow," I said. "Everything will be settled tomorrow."

"Good-bye!" repeated Gagin. The window was closed.

I was on the point of tapping on the pane. I was ready then to tell Gagin I wanted to ask him for his sister's hand. But it did not seem the moment for match-making. . . . "Till tomorrow," I thought. "Tomorrow I will be a happy man."

Tomorrow I was to be happy. But happiness knows no morrow; nor has it any yesterday. Happiness forgets the past and takes no thought for the future. It knows only the present—and that not a day, but a moment.

I do not remember how I got back to Z. It was not my legs which took me, nor a boat which bore me—broad powerful wings wafted me across. I passed a bush on which a nightingale was singing, and stood for a long time listening to her song. It seemed to me she was singing of my love and of my happiness.

XXI

As I approached the familiar dwelling the next morning, I was struck by the fact that all the windows were wide open, and the door, too. Some bits of paper lay about in front of it; a maidservant with a broom appeared in the doorway.

I went up to her. . . .

"They've gone," she barked out before I had time to ask her if Gagin was at home.

"Gone?" I echoed. "What d'you mean? Where have they gone?"

"They left this morning, at six o'clock, and they didn't say where they were going. Wait a minute—aren't you Mr. N.?"

"Yes."

"They left a letter with the mistress for you."

The maid went upstairs and came back holding a letter. "This is for you."

"It can't be.... How..." I blurted out. The girl looked at me blankly and resumed her sweeping.

I opened the letter. It was from Gagín—not a word from Asya. He began by telling me not to be angry with him for his sudden departure. He was sure that, on mature reflection, I would approve of his decision. He had been unable to find any other way out of a situation which might have become difficult and dangerous. "Last night," he said, "while we both sat in silence waiting for Asya, I became finally convinced of the necessity for a separation. There are certain prejudices which I respect. I understand that you could not marry Asya. She told me all. I was obliged to pacify her by yielding to her repeated, earnest requests." He finished up by expressing regret that our friendship had ended so quickly, wished me luck, assured me of his regard, and begged me not to try and find them.

"What prejudices?" I exclaimed, as if he could have heard me. "What nonsense! What right had you to take her away from me?" I clutched at my temples....

The servant called out loudly to the landlady; her alarm forced me to take myself in hand. One idea consumed my whole being—to find them, to find them at all costs. I could not submit to the blow, could not reconcile myself to such a solution of the problem. I learned from the landlady that they had gone aboard a steamer journeying downstream at six in the morning. I went to the ticket-office. There I was told they had taken tickets to Cologne. I rushed home, intending to pack my things and take the next boat after them. My way lay past the house of Frau Luise.... Suddenly I heard my name called. Looking up, I saw the burgomaster's widow at the win-

dow of the very room in which I had seen Asya yesterday. She smiled her revolting smile and called to me. I turned away and was just going to pass on, but she called out that she had something for me. These words brought me to a stop and I went into the house. How shall I describe my feelings on finding myself in that room again?

"I was only to give you this," began the old woman, showing me a small note, "if you came to me yourself, but you're such a nice young man. Take it."

I took the note.

On a tiny scrap of paper the following words were hurriedly pencilled:

"Good-bye, we shall never meet again. It is not out of pride that I am leaving—but because it is the only thing I can do. When I wept in front of you yesterday, if you had said one word to me, just one word, I would have stayed. You did not say it. It must be that everything is for the best. . . . Good-bye forever!"

One word. . . . Oh, how mad I had been! That word. . . . I had uttered it with tears the day before, I had lavished it on the empty air, I had repeated it in the open fields . . . but I had not said it to her, I had not told her that I loved her. . . . And I could not have uttered that word then. When I had met her in that fatal room, there had not as yet been a clear consciousness of my love in me. It was not aroused even when I was sitting, in blank stupor and strained silence, beside her brother . . . it had only sprung into irrepressible life a few minutes later when, terrified that a calamity had occurred, I began searching for her, calling her . . . but it was too late then. "But that's impossible!" you will tell me. I do not know if it is possible, but I do know it is true. Asya would never have gone away if there had been the slightest shadow of coquetry in her and if she had not found herself in such a false situation. She could not endure

what any other girl would have endured—I had not understood this. My evil genius had checked the declaration on my lips at my last meeting with Gagin in front of the dark window, and the last straw, at which I might even then have caught, had slipped from my hands.

That same day I returned to the town of L. with my luggage and took the steamer to Cologne. I remember, just as the steamer got under way and I was taking a mental farewell of those streets, of all those places which I was never to forget, I caught sight of Hannchen. She was sitting on a bench on the bank of the river. Her face was pale but not sad. A handsome youth stood beside her, telling her something and laughing. And across the Rhine my little Madonna peered as wistfully as ever out of the dark foliage of the old ash-tree.

XXII

At Cologne I came on traces of the Gagins. I learned that they had gone to London, and I followed them there. But in London all my endeavours to find them were vain. For long I could not reconcile myself to failure, I persisted in the search, but at last had to give up all hope of ever finding them.

And I never saw them again—I never saw Asya again. Vague rumours about her reached me occasionally, but she had disappeared from me forever. I don't even know whether she's alive or dead. A few years ago, when I was abroad, I caught sight for a moment of a woman in a railway carriage whose face vividly recalled the unforgettable features.... But no doubt I was deceived by a chance likeness. Asya remains in my memory the girl I once knew in the happiest time of my life, the girl I saw for the last time huddled up in a low wooden chair.

I must, however, confess that I did not grieve for her so very long. I even told myself that fate had done well in not uniting Asya and me. I consoled myself by the reflection that I should most likely not have been happy with a wife like her. I was young then—and the future, really so short, so swift, seemed infinite to me. "Could not the same thing happen again," I asked myself, "and still better, still more beautiful?" I have been intimate with other women, but the feeling which Asya aroused in me—that ardent, tender, profound feeling—has never repeated itself. No other eyes have ever replaced for me those which were once fixed on me so lovingly; to no other heart which has rested against my breast has my own heart responded with such sweet, joyous pangs. Doomed to the solitary life of a lonely bachelor, I am wearing out the tedious years, but I preserve as sacred relics her notes and a withered sprig of geranium—the very flower she once threw to me out of the window. Till this day it retains a faint perfume, and the hand which gave it to me, that hand which I was able only once to press to my lips, has perhaps long been mouldering in the grave. And I—what has come of me? What is left of me, of those blissful, tumultuous days, those winged hopes and aspirations? The faint exhalations of an insignificant flower have survived all the joys and the sorrows of a human being—may survive the human being himself.

FIRST LOVE



...THE GUESTS had gone long ago. The clock struck half past twelve. Besides the host there was no one left in the room but Sergei Nikolaich and Vladimir Petrovich. The host rang for the servant to take away the remains of the supper.

"So we are agreed," he said, settling himself comfortably in his arm-chair and lighting a cigar. "Each of us is to tell the story of his first love. You begin, Sergei Nikolaich."

Sergei Nikolaich, a chubby little man with puffy features and a fair complexion, looked at the host and raised his eyes to the ceiling. "I never had a first love," he said at last. "I started straight away with my second."

"How was that?"

"Quite simple. I was eighteen when I first began paying court to a certain charming young lady, but I behaved as if this were nothing new for me, exactly as I afterwards made love to others. As a matter of fact I fell in love for the first and last time at the age of six, with my nurse; but that was a very long time ago, and the details of our relations have escaped my memory, and even if I could remember them, whom could they interest?"

"So what shall we do?" began the host. "There was nothing very entertaining about my first love, either; I

was never in love before I met Anna Ivanovna, my present wife, and the course of our love ran smooth from the very first: our parents made the match, we soon became fond of one another, and got married without delay. My story can be told in very few words. I admit, gentlemen, that when I raised the question of first love I was counting on you, who are—well, if not exactly old—still not young bachelors; perhaps *you* can tell us something interesting, Vladimir Petrovich?"

Vladimir Petrovich, a man of about forty with grizzled black hair, said hesitatingly: "The story of my first love really is somewhat unusual."

"Ha!" exclaimed the host and Sergei Nikolaich both at once. "All the better. . . . Let us hear it."

"Very well . . . but no, I will not tell you the story, I am a poor narrator; I'm sure to make it either dry and brief, or lengthy and false. If you don't mind, I'd rather put down all I can remember in a note-book, and then read it to you."

His companions protested at first, but Vladimir Petrovich had his own way in the end. They met again a fortnight later, and Vladimir Petrovich proved as good as his word.

This is what he read to his hearers out of his note-book:

I

I was sixteen years old at the time. What I am going to relate took place during the summer of 1833.

I was living in Moscow with my parents. They had rented a house outside the town, at Kaluzhsky Gate, just opposite Neskuchny Gardens. I was reading for the University, but by no means over-exerting myself.

I enjoyed perfect liberty and did just as I pleased, especially after parting with my last tutor, a Frenchman,

who was unable to forget that he had descended upon Russia *comme une bombe*, and who lolled on his bed all day with a defiant air. My father treated me with indulgent indifference; my mother hardly took any notice of me, though she had no other children; other cares engrossed all her attention. My father, still a young man and very good-looking, had married her for her money; she was ten years his senior. My mother led a melancholy life: always anxious, jealous, low-spirited, though never in my father's presence; she stood in great awe of him, and he bore himself coldly aloof, with an air of severity. I have never met anyone so exquisitely refined, so confident, so imperious as my father.

I shall never forget my first weeks in that house. The weather was perfect; we moved on the 9th of May, the feast of St. Nicholas. I strolled about the grounds and Neskuchny Gardens, sometimes wandering beyond the confines of the city; I usually took a book with me, Kaidanov's *History* or something of that sort, but seldom so much as opened it; I chiefly occupied myself in reciting poetry, for which I had a very good memory; my blood tingled, and my heart ached with a strange, exquisite pain; I was in constant expectation and fear of something, marvelling at everything, ready for anything; my imagination played and hovered around the same set of ideas all the time, like swifts hovering over a belfry at dawn. I fell into reveries, grew melancholy, sometimes even shed tears; but, through all these tears and sudden fits of sadness, whether occasioned by some melodious line or by the beauty of the evening, the joyous sensation of youthful life, turbulent and seething, made itself felt, like the grass sending up its blades through the earth in the spring.

I had a pony for my own use. I would saddle it myself and ride far away, setting it at a gallop and imagining myself a knight at a tournament (how cheerfully the

wind whistled past my ears!), or, raising my face to the sky, I would absorb its radiant light and blueness with my receptive soul.

As I remember it, the image of woman, the faintest apparition of a woman's love, seldom, if at all, took definite shape in my mind; but in all that I thought or felt there lurked the half-conscious, shy presentiment of something new, ineffably sweet—in a word, something feminine.

This presentiment, this constant expectation, permeated my whole being; I breathed it, I felt it coursing through my veins, in every drop of my blood ... and very soon it was destined to come true.

The main building in our country abode was a wooden house with columns and two low-roofed annexes; a tiny factory turning out cheap wall-paper was housed in the one on the left side. I often went there to watch a dozen lean, unkempt, sallow-faced urchins in dirty overalls leap on the wooden levers, which bore down on the rectangular frame of the press, to stamp out the gaudy patterns with the weight of their puny bodies. The annex on the right was unoccupied and to let. One day, three weeks or so after the 9th of May, its shutters were flung open and female faces showed at the windows; some family had taken the annex. I remember my mother asking our butler that day at dinner who our new neighbours were, and on hearing the name of Princess Zasekina, saying first, not without a certain respect: "Oh, Princess. . ." and then: "Probably hard up."

"They had three izvoshchiks for their move," the butler remarked, placing a dish on the table respectfully. "They have no carriage of their own, and the furniture is very cheap looking."

"Yes," said my mother. "But still I'm glad. . . ."

My father cast an icy glance at her and she said no more.

And truly, Princess Zasekina could not have been a rich woman: the annex she had rented was so rickety, small, and low-ceilinged that no family of the slightest affluence would have consented to live there. But I did not take much heed of the conversation at the time. The rank of Princess did not impress me much: I had just read Schiller's *Robbers*.

II

I was in the habit of sauntering about the grounds with a gun every evening, in the hope of shooting crows. I had long felt hatred for those furtive, cunning, predatory birds. On the day of which I am speaking, I went out on my usual quest, and, after having followed every path in vain (the crows caught sight of me and were uttering short caws somewhere in the distance), I found myself close to the low fence between our part of the grounds and the narrow slip of garden behind the right-hand annex and pertaining to it. I walked by with my eyes lowered. Suddenly I heard voices; I glanced over the fence and stood as if petrified—a strange spectacle presented itself to my eyes.

A few paces away, in a clearing among green raspberry bushes, stood a tall, slender girl in a dress of pink, striped material, a white kerchief on her head; four young men crowded round her, and she was striking each of them in turns on the forehead with those small grey-blue flowers so familiar to children, though I do not know their name. Their petals form tiny sacks which burst open with a pop when struck against a firm surface. The young men offered their foreheads so eagerly, and in all the girl's movements (she had her profile turned to me) there was so much that was imperious, affectionate, mocking and attractive that I almost cried out in my wonder and

delight, and felt I would have given anything to have my own forehead slapped by those dainty fingers. My gun slipped to the grass, I forgot everything, devouring with my eyes the slender waist, the graceful neck, the beautiful arms, the slightly dishevelled fair hair showing beneath the white kerchief, the intelligent eyes, half hidden by the lashes, the delicate cheek below the lashes. . . .

"Young man—hi! young man!" cried a voice close to my ear. "Is that the way to behave, staring at strange young ladies?"

I started, dumbfounded. Quite near, on the other side of the fence, stood a man with short black hair, regarding me ironically. At that very moment the girl turned towards me. I saw two large grey eyes set in a lively and animated face, and suddenly the face broke out into laughter, white teeth gleamed, the brows were raised in a comical manner. . . . I flushed, snatched up my gun and, pursued by peals of ringing but by no means unfriendly laughter, rushed into my room, flung myself on the bed and covered my face with my hands. My heart was plunging wildly; I felt at the same time ashamed and happy, never before had I been so agitated.

After resting for a short time, I combed my hair, brushed my coat and went down to tea. The image of the young girl was before me all the time, and though my heart no longer plunged wildly, I was conscious of an exquisite pang now and then.

"What's the matter?" my father asked me suddenly. "Have you killed a crow?"

I wanted to tell him all, but refrained, merely indulging in a secret smile. Before going to bed I twirled two or three times on my heel for some reason, put pomatum on my hair, and lying down, slept like a top all night. Towards morning I woke for a moment, raised my head from the pillow, cast a delighted look all round, and went to sleep again.

III

"How can I get to know them?" was my first thought on waking. I went into the garden before breakfast, but I did not venture too close to the fence and I saw no one. After breakfast I strolled up and down the street in front of their house, looking into the windows from a distance. . . . Once I thought I saw *her* face behind the curtain and retreated in alarm. "But I must get to know her," I thought as I paced about the stretch of sanded ground in front of Neskuchny Gardens. "But how? That is the question." I recalled the minutest details of yesterday's encounter; somehow the picture of her laughing at me remained clearest of all in my memory. Destiny, however, had been busying itself on my account while I was fretting and laying plans.

While I was away, my mother received from her new neighbour a letter written on grey paper and sealed with the dark sealing-wax generally used on postal orders and bottles of cheap wine. In this letter, which was written in an unrefined hand, and full of bad grammar, the Princess begged my mother to use her influence on her behalf; my mother, she wrote, was on good terms with certain influential folk on whom the fate of the Princess depended, and that of her children, for she had some very important lawsuits on. "I appeal to you," she wrote, "as one well-bread lady to another, and at the same time I take pleasure in this opportunity." She wound up her letter with a request to be received by my mother. I found my mother in a very bad humour: my father was away and she had no one to advise her. Not to answer "a well-bread lady," and a Princess at that, was out of the question, but how to answer, my mother did not quite know. To write a note in French she felt would be not quite the thing, but my mother was not very strong in the spelling of Russian herself, and she knew it and was

loath to expose herself. So she was glad when I came and immediately sent me to the Princess, bidding me to tell her by word of mouth that my mother would be glad to oblige Her Ladyship in any way she could, and was prepared to receive her between twelve and one o'clock. This unexpectedly rapid fulfilment of my secret wishes, while it made me very happy, at the same time alarmed me; but I did not show the embarrassment I felt, and went up to my room—to put on a new tie and *surtout*: I had to go about in a jacket and turn-down collar at home, much to my displeasure.

IV

In the shabby, cramped passage of the annex, which I entered trembling all over, I was met by an ancient, grey-haired man-servant, with a dark, coppery complexion, morose, pig-like eyes and such deep wrinkles on his brow and temples as I had never before seen. In his hand was a plate with the remains of a salted herring on it, and he asked me gruffly, closing the door of the room with his foot:

“What do you want?”

“Is Princess Zasekina at home?” I asked.

“Vonifaty!” came in a shaky female voice from behind the door.

Without a word, the servant turned on his heel, revealing the well-worn back of his livery, adorned by a solitary rusty button stamped with a coat of arms, and walked away, putting the plate on the floor.

“Have you been to the police station?” the same shaky voice asked. The servant mumbled something in answer. “What did you say?” went on the voice. “Somebody to see me? The young gentleman from next door? Well, ask him in.”

"Go into the drawing-room, please," said the servant, reappearing and lifting the plate from the floor. I straightened my tie and went into the "drawing-room."

I found myself in a small, not very tidy room, with shabby furniture, which looked as if it had been dumped down in a hurry. By the window, in an arm-chair with a broken arm, sat a woman of fifty or so, with a plain face; she had no cap on and wore an old green dress with a gaudy worsted scarf at the neck. Her small black eyes were fixed on my person.

I walked up to her and made my bow.

"Have I the honour of addressing Princess Zasekina?"

"I am Princess Zasekina; are you the son of Mr. V.?"

"Yes, Madam. I have come with a message from my mother."

"Won't you sit down? Vonifaty! Where are my keys, have you seen them anywhere?"

I informed Princess Zasekina of my mother's reply to her letter. She listened to me, drumming on the window-sill with thick red fingers, and when I had done, again fixed her gaze on me.

"Very good; I will be sure to come," she at last brought out. "You look very young! How old may you be?"

"Sixteen," I faltered.

The Princess pulled some greasy papers, scribbled all over, out of her pocket and, holding them close to her eyes, began looking through them.

"A very nice age," she said suddenly, turning and fidgeting in her chair. "You mustn't stand on ceremony with us. We are all very simple here."

"Much too simple," I thought to myself, casting a look of instinctive repulsion over her ungainly person.

At that moment the other door into the drawing-room was flung open, and the girl I had seen the day before

appeared in the doorway. She raised her hand, and a smile flitted over her lips.

"My daughter," said the Princess, pointing with her elbow in the direction of the door. "Zina, this is the son of our neighbour, Mr. V. What is your name, pray?"

"Vladimir," I answered, rising and almost stammering with excitement.

"And your patronymic?"

"Petrovich."

"Fancy! I used to know a chief of police called Vladimir Petrovich. You needn't look for my keys, Vonifaty, they're in my pocket."

The young girl went on looking at me with her mocking smile, her eyes slightly narrowed, her head a little on one side.

"I have seen Monsieur Voldemar before," she began. (The silvery tones of her voice sent a thrill through me.) "You don't mind me calling you by your Christian name?"

"Why, of course not!" I stammered out.

"Where was that?" asked the Princess. The youthful Princess did not answer her mother.

"Have you anything to do just now?" she asked, not taking her eyes off me.

"No, indeed!"

"Would you like to help me wind up some wool? Come with me."

With a nod of her head she left the drawing-room. I followed her.

The furniture was less shabby and arranged with more taste in the room which we now entered. Not that I was in a condition to notice anything at the moment; I moved about as one in a dream, a sensation of bliss carried almost to the point of imbecility seemed to affect all my limbs.

The younger Princess sat down, got out a skein of

red wool, and, pointing to a chair opposite her, carefully unwound it on to my outstretched hands. She did all this in silence, with a comical air of leisure, a serene, arch smile on her parted lips. She began winding the wool round a card bent in two, and suddenly shot such a swift radiant glance at me that I involuntarily lowered my eyes. When her eyes, which were usually narrowed, opened wide for a moment, her face was completely changed—her features seemed to be suddenly irradiated.

"I wonder what you thought of me yesterday, Monsieur Voldemar?" she said, breaking the silence. "I suppose you thoroughly disapproved of me."

"I . . . Princess . . . I did not think anything. . . . How could I? . . ." I answered in confusion.

"Look here!" she said. "You don't know me yet; I'm a strange creature; I always want everyone to tell me the truth. I heard you say you were sixteen. I am twenty-one; you see how much older I am, and therefore you must always speak the truth to me . . . and obey me," she added. "Look at me, why don't you look me in the face?"

My embarrassment became still greater; I raised my eyes to hers, however. She smiled, but not as before, this time it was a smile of approval.

"Go on, look at me!" she said, lowering her voice indulgently. "I don't mind. I like your face; I have a feeling we are going to be friends. Do you like me?" she added archly.

"Princess. . ." I began.

"In the first place, you are to call me Zinaida Alexandrovna, and in the second, I can't bear the way children . . . young men," she corrected herself, "have of not saying what they think straight out. Leave that to grown-ups. You do like me, don't you?"

Although her frankness delighted me, I could not help being somewhat offended. Anxious to show her she was

not dealing with a little boy, I said, trying to assume an air of ponderous familiarity:

"I like you very much, Zinaida Alexandrovna, of course I do, I have not the slightest desire to conceal the fact...."

She slowly shook her head at me.

"Have you got a tutor?" she suddenly asked.

"No, I haven't had a tutor for a long time." This was a lie, hardly a month had elapsed since I had parted with my French tutor.

"Oh, I see you are quite grown-up."

She tapped lightly on my fingers. "Hold your arms straight!" And she began unwinding the wool with great diligence.

Taking advantage of the fact that she was looking down at her work, I proceeded to study her, first surreptitiously, then more and more boldly. Her face seemed still more charming to me than it had the day before, the features were so delicate, so intelligent, so sweet. She sat with her back to the window, on which hung a white curtain; a sunbeam, penetrating through the curtain, streamed softly over her fluffy golden hair, her innocent neck, sloping shoulders, her tender, calm bosom. I looked at her, and how close and familiar she seemed to have become! I felt as if I had known her for ages, and that I had known nothing, had never really lived before I met her. . . . She was wearing a dark, rather worn dress with an apron over it. I felt as if I would like to stroke every pleat of this dress and this apron. The toes of her shoes peeped out from beneath her dress. I would have loved to prostrate myself in adoration at those shoes. . . . "And here I am," I mused, "sitting before her. . . . I have made her acquaintance. . . . Good heavens—what bliss!" I all but leaped from my seat in my ecstasy, but checked myself in time and only shuffled my feet like a child who has been given something nice to eat.

I was as content as a fish in its native element, and I wished I could stay in that room, on that chair, forever.

The lowered eyelids were gently raised, and again her luminous eyes shed their kindly radiance on me, and again she smiled.

"How you look at me!" she said slowly, shaking her finger at me.

I flushed crimson. "She understands everything, she sees everything," flashed through my mind. "And how could she help seeing and understanding everything?"

There was a sudden sound in the next room—the clatter of a sword.

"Zina!" cried the Princess from the drawing-room. "Belovzorov has brought you a kitten."

"A kitten!" exclaimed Zinaida, and leaping from her chair, she flung the ball of wool on my lap and ran out of the room.

I, too, rose and, placing the wool on the window-sill, walked into the drawing-room and stood still in amazement: in the middle of the room, all its four paws spread out on the floor, lay a tabby kitten; Zinaida was kneeling over it, gently holding up its head. Beside the old Princess, taking up almost the whole space between the windows, stood a fine young man, a Hussar, fair, curly-haired, with a ruddy face and prominent eyes.

"What a funny little thing!" crooned Zinaida. "Its eyes aren't grey, they're green, and look what great big ears! Thank you, Victor Yegorych! You're a dear!"

The Hussar, in whom I recognized one of the young men I had seen the day before, smiled and bowed, his spurs clicking, and the metal rings of his scabbard tinkling.

"You were pleased to say you wished to have a tabby kitten with big ears . . . so I got one. Your word is law." The young man made another bow.

The kitten mewed faintly and began sniffing at the floor.

"It's hungry!" exclaimed Zinaida. "Vonifaty! Sonya! Bring some milk!"

A maid in a shabby yellow dress, with a faded kerchief round her neck, came in, carrying a cup of milk, which she placed before the kitten. The kitten started, screwed up its eyes and began lapping.

"How rosy its tongue is!" remarked Zinaida, bending her head almost to the floor and trying to peer sideways right under the kitten's chin.

The kitten drank its fill and began purring, lifting its front paws up and down primly. Zinaida got up and turned to the maid. "Take it away," she said indifferently.

"Your hand—for the kitten," said the Hussar smirking, his massive frame wriggling in the tight new uniform.

"Both!" replied Zinaida and held her hands out to him. While he was kissing them, she looked at me over his shoulder.

I stood motionless, unable to make up my mind whether to laugh, make some remark, or remain silent. Suddenly, through the open door into the passage, I saw our footman Fyodor making signs at me. I walked over to him mechanically.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Your mamma sent me for you," he whispered. "She is angry with you for not coming back with the answer."

"Why, how long have I been here?"

"Over an hour."

"Over an hour!" I repeated involuntarily and, going back to the drawing-room, began to take my leave, bowing and scraping my feet.

"Where are you going?" the younger Princess asked me, shooting me a glance over the Hussar's shoulder.

"I've got to go home. So I may tell my mother," I

added, turning towards the old lady, "to expect you some time after one, I presume."

"Yes, tell her that, sir!"

The old Princess hastily pulled out her snuff-box and inhaled a pinch so loudly that I actually started. "Tell her that," she repeated, blinking tearfully and hawking.

I made another bow, turned on my heel and walked out of the room, with that sensation of discomfort in my back, so familiar to any very young man who knows he is being watched.

"Mind you come and see us again, Monsieur Volde-mar," cried Zinaida with another of her laughs.

"Why does she laugh so much?" I thought as I walked home, accompanied by Fyodor, who, though he said nothing, followed me in obvious disapproval. My mother scolded me and wondered what I could have been doing all that time at the Princess'. I did not answer, but went up to my room. All of a sudden I felt profoundly melancholy. It was all I could do not to burst into tears.... I was jealous of the Hussar!

V

The Princess, true to her promise, called on my mother, and—failed to make herself liked. I was not present at the meeting, but I heard my mother tell my father at table that that Princess Zasekina seemed *une femme très vulgaire*, that she had tired her out with requests to speak to Prince Sergei about her, that she was full of lawsuits and disputes—*de vilaines affaires d'argent*—and that she must be a regular *intrigante*. My mother added, however, that she had invited her and her daughter to dinner for the next day (when I heard the words "and her daughter," I bent low over my plate), for, after all, they were neighbours, and the name was a good one. In

answer to all this, my father told my mother he remembered now who this lady was; that in his youth he had known the late Prince Zasekin, a very well-bred, but vain and foolish man; that he was known to society as *le Parisien*, owing to his prolonged sojourn in Paris; that he had once been very rich but had gambled away his fortune, and had then, for some reason or other, probably for money—though he could have made a better choice—here my father gave one of his icy smiles—married the daughter of some petty official, and afterwards gone in for speculation, and finally ruined himself.

"I hope she does not mean to try and borrow money," remarked my mother.

"I wouldn't be surprised if she did," my father said calmly. "Does she speak French?"

"Very badly."

"H'm. But what does that matter? I think you said you had invited her daughter, too; someone told me she was a nice girl, and well-educated."

"If so, she does not take after her mother."

"Nor her father," retorted my father. "For though an educated man, he was very stupid."

My mother sighed and fell into a reverie. My father said no more. I had felt exceedingly uncomfortable during this entire conversation.

After dinner I went into the garden but did not take my gun. I had vowed to myself that I would not go near the "Zasekin garden," but some irresistible force seemed to draw me towards it, and not in vain. Hardly had I approached the fence when I saw Zinaida. This time she was alone. She held a book in her hands and was walking slowly along the path. She did not notice me.

I almost let her pass, but bethought myself in time and gave a little cough.

She turned round without stopping, merely putting aside the broad blue ribbon of her round straw hat and

looking at me with a faint smile before turning her eyes to the page again. I took off my cap, loitered about for a while and left the spot with a heavy heart. "*Que suis-je pour elle?*" I said to myself in French (God knows why).

Familiar steps sounded behind me; I looked back and saw my father walking towards me with his usual brisk, light gait.

"Was that the Princess' daughter?" he asked.

"Yes."

"So you know her?"

"I saw her this morning at her mother's."

My father stopped, turned sharply on his heel, and walked back. When he reached Zinaida's side, he bowed courteously. She returned the bow, though not without a certain expression of surprise on her face, and lowered her book. I saw her eyes follow him as he walked away. My father was always elegantly dressed, quite simply but with a taste that was all his own; but never had his figure seemed more graceful, or his grey hat set more becomingly on his ever so slightly thinning wavy hair.

I took a few steps towards Zinaida, but she did not so much as look at me, and raising her book once more, walked away.

VI

I spent the whole of the evening and the following morning in a kind of numb misery. I remember trying to work and taking up Kaidanov, but in vain did the rounded periods in the famous text-book flash before my eyes. I read at least ten times the words: "Julius Caesar was renowned for his valour in battle," and, finding I could make no sense of them, finally put the book down. Just before dinner I pomaded my hair again and again dressed myself up in my *surtout* and tie.

"What's that for?" asked my mother. "You're not a student yet, and who knows whether you'll pass the examinations. Besides, your jacket is quite new, is it to be thrown aside?"

"But we have visitors to dinner," I whispered, almost desperate.

"Nonsense! Those visitors don't matter!"

There was nothing for it but to submit. I changed into my jacket but did not take off my tie. The Princess and her daughter arrived half an hour before dinner-time; the old woman had thrown a yellow shawl over the green dress which was already familiar to me, and wore an old-fashioned bonnet with flame-coloured ribbons. She embarked immediately upon the subject of her promissory notes, sighed, complained of her poverty, whined, but deported herself without a trace of bashfulness, taking snuff as noisily and fidgeting in her chair as unconstrainedly as if she were at home. The idea that she was a Princess did not seem to enter her mind. Zinaida, on the other hand, was prim, almost supercilious, every inch a Princess. A cold rigidity and gravity showed in her face, and I hardly recognized her; her smile and glance were different, too; but in this new guise she was no less beautiful in my eyes. She wore a *barège* dress patterned with irregular pale-blue scrolls; her hair fell in long ringlets on either side of her face, in the English manner—a style well suited to the cold expression of her face. My father sat next to her during dinner and kept his neighbour entertained with his refined and quiet courtesy. Every now and then he would look into her face, and every now and then she would look at him; and there was something strange, almost hostile in those glances! They conversed in French; I remember being struck with the purity of Zinaida's pronunciation. The older Princess behaved at table with the freedom she had already displayed, and seemed perfectly at her ease, eating a great

deal and praising the food. My mother obviously found her tiresome, and answered her with a kind of melancholy disdain; my father occasionally winced almost imperceptibly. My mother did not care for Zinaida, either. "Proud chit!" she said on the next day. "I'd like to know what she finds to be so proud of, *avec sa mine de grisette!*"

"You have evidently never seen a *grisette* in your life," remarked my father.

"And thank God for that!"

"Thank God, indeed . . . but that being the case, you are not entitled to judge of them."

Zinaida took not the slightest notice of me. Soon after dinner, her mother took her leave.

"So I may count on your protection, Maria Nikolayevna and Pyotr Vasilyevich?" she said in a sing-song voice, addressing both my parents. "There it is! I have known better times, and now they're gone. Here I am—Her Ladyship, if you please!" she added with an unpleasant laugh. "Honour's not much good when there isn't any food."

My father made her a deferential bow and saw her out of the room. I stood there, in my short jacket, gazing at the floor like one condemned to death. Zinaida's treatment had completely annihilated me. Judge of my surprise, therefore, when, on passing me, she said in a rapid whisper, the former kindly look in her eyes: "Come and see us at eight this evening, mind you do, now. . . ." I could only fling out my arms in astonishment—but she had gone, throwing a white scarf over her head.

VII

Punctually at eight, dressed in my *surtout*, my hair brushed into a tuft on the top of my head, I entered the passage of the annex occupied by the Princess. The old man-servant, casting a morose glance at me, rose reluc-

tantly from the bench on which he was sitting. The sound of merry voices came from the drawing-room. I opened the door and stepped back in amazement. In the middle of the room, on a chair, stood the young Princess, holding a man's hat in her hands; five men crowded round the chair. They were all trying to get their hands into the inside of the hat, while she held it out of their reach, shaking it. On catching sight of me, she shouted: "Wait, wait! Here's a fresh visitor, he must have a ticket, too," and, jumping lightly off the chair, she took me by my coat-sleeve. "Come on," she said, "don't stand there! Messieurs, allow me to introduce you to one another: this is Monsieur Voldemar, our neighbour's son. And these," here she turned to me, pointing to the guests one after another, "are Count Malevsky, Doctor Lushin, the poet Maidanov, retired Captain Nirmatsky, and Belovzorov of the Hussars—you've already met him. I hope you'll all be friends."

I was too embarrassed even to make a bow; in the person of Dr. Lushin I recognized the dark-haired gentleman who had ridiculed me so cruelly in the garden; the rest were all strangers to me.

"Count!" Zinaida went on. "Write out a ticket for Monsieur Voldemar."

"That's not fair," objected the Count, speaking with a slight Polish accent. He was a handsome, dandified, dark individual with expressive brown eyes, a thin pale nose and a neat little moustache above the smallest of mouths. "*He* didn't play forfeits with us."

"Not fair, not fair!" echoed Belovzorov and the gentleman who had been introduced to me as a retired captain, a man of about forty years of age, his face atrociously pitted with smallpox, his hair as curly as a Negro's, round-shouldered, bandy-legged, and wearing an unbuttoned military coat without epaulettes.

"Make him out a ticket, I tell you," repeated the Princess. "I won't have sedition! It is Monsieur Voldemar's first day with us, and the law may be relaxed in his favour. Stop grumbling, now, and do as I tell you!"

The Count shrugged his shoulders, but inclining his head submissively, he took up a pen in his white ringed fingers, tore a strip from a piece of paper and began writing.

"Will you at least allow us to explain the rules to Monsieur Voldemar?" asked Lushin in a sneering voice. "He seems to be entirely at a loss. You see, young man, we're playing forfeits; the Princess has been fined, and whoever gets the lucky ticket will be entitled to kiss her hand. Have I made myself clear?"

I only stared at him and stood there as if stunned, while the Princess once more leaped on to the chair and began shaking the hat. Everybody reached out for it, I among them.

"Maidanov," said the Princess, addressing a tall young man with a lean face, small myopic eyes and long black hair, "being a poet, you must show magnanimity and let Monsieur Voldemar have your ticket as well as his own, so that he has two chances instead of one."

But Maidanov only shook his head, tossing back his long hair. I put my hand into the hat last, pulled out my ticket . . . and unfolded it. Judge of my feelings when I saw the word *kiss* on it!

"Kiss!" I cried out involuntarily.

"Bravo! He's won!" cried the Princess instantly. "I'm so glad!" Descending from the chair, she looked into my eyes with a smile so sweet and calm that my heart seemed to turn within me. "Are *you* glad?"

"Me?" was all I could bring out.

"Sell me your ticket," blurted out Belovzorov close to my ear. "I'll give you a hundred rubles."

I shot the Hussar a withering glance which caused

Zinaida to clap her hands and Lushin to exclaim: "Bravo!"

"But," continued Lushin, "as master of ceremonies I must insist on strict adherence to the rules. Monsieur Voldemar, go down on one knee! That is our custom."

Zinaida stood before me, her head a little on one side—as if to get a better view of me—and extended her hand to me with the utmost gravity. My vision went dim; I meant to go down on one knee, but fell on both, and touched Zinaida's fingers with my lips so awkwardly that I got a scratch on the tip of my nose from one of her nails.

"That'll do," said Lushin, helping me to get up.

The game of forfeits went on. Zinaida made me sit beside her. What penalties she invented! One of them fell to her own lot; she was called upon to represent "a monument." Choosing the ungainly Nirmatsky for her pedestal, she made him lie flat on his face and draw his head into his shoulders. Laughter never ceased for a moment. Brought up as I had been in the sober seclusion of a respectable upper-class home, was it to be wondered that all this noise and clatter, the unconstrained, almost riotous merry-making, the incredible intimacy with strangers, fairly went to my head? I was intoxicated as with wine. I began laughing and talking louder than anyone else in the room, so that even the old Princess, who was in the next room with some official she had summoned for a consultation, came in to see what was the matter. But I felt so happy that, as the saying goes, I did not turn a hair, nor did I give a straw for the derisive remarks of some or the black looks of others. Zinaida continued to single me out and never let me leave her side. One of the penalties I received was to sit close to her, the same silk kerchief covering both our heads, and tell her *my secret*. I remember my sensations when our two heads were suddenly enveloped by a fragrant, stifling, diaphanous haze, when through this haze her

eyes shone so soft and so near, and her breath came so warm, and her teeth gleamed, and the ends of her hair tickled and stung me. I was silent; she smiled mysteriously and archly, and at last whispered: "Well?" while I only blushed, and laughed, and turned my head away, almost breathless. We soon got tired of forfeits and turned to a game with a piece of string. Heavens, what delight I felt when, during a fit of abstraction, I received a sharp rap on the knuckles from her! How I pretended to be wool-gathering again, and how she purposely avoided touching my hands, just to tease me!

The pranks and tricks we played that evening! We played the piano, we sang and we danced, we pretended to be Gipsies camping, dressing up Nirmatsky as a bear and making him drink salty water. Count Malevsky showed us all manner of card tricks, finishing up by shuffling the cards for whist and dealing them out so that he got all the trumps, for which Lushin "heartily congratulated" him. Maidanov recited a few passages from his poem *The Assassin* (the romantic movement was then at its height), which he intended to have published in a black binding with blood-red capital letters. We stole the cap from the knees of the official and made him dance the *Kazachok* before we would return it. A woman's cap was put on old Vonifaty's head, and Zinaida donned a man's hat. . . . But it would be impossible to relate all we did. Belovzorov alone kept aloof in a corner for the most part, knitting his brows and sulking. . . . Every now and then his eyes became bloodshot, an angry flush suffused his features, and it seemed as if he were just about to rush upon us all and scatter us like so many chips; but the young Princess would look at him, shaking an admonishing finger, and he would go back to his corner again.

At last we were exhausted. Though the old Princess was still perfectly game, as she herself put it, and did

not mind the noise, even she felt tired and wished for a rest. Soon after eleven supper was served; it consisted of a piece of old dry cheese and cold pies with minced ham, all of which I found more delicious than any *pâté*; there was only one bottle of wine, and there was something queer about it—it was very dark, with a bulgy neck, and the wine itself tasted of red paint; nobody drank it, anyhow. Faint and worn out with happiness, I left the annex; Zinaida pressed my hand firmly as she bade me good-bye, smiling her mysterious smile again.

I felt the heavy, moist breath of the night on my heated face; there was thunder in the air; black clouds were gradually increased in size as they crept across the sky, their vague contours continually changing. A breeze shuddered restlessly among the dark tree-tops, and somewhere far away, on the other side of the sky, the thunder seemed to be grumbling to itself, with angry hollow sounds.

I went to my room by the back-door. My servant slept on the floor and I had to step over him. He woke up, saw me, and reported that my mother was displeased with me again and had wanted to send for me, but my father would not let her. (Never before had I gone to bed without bidding good night to my mother and asking for her blessing.) Well—it could not be helped!

Telling the man I would take my clothes off myself and go to bed, I snuffed out the candle. . . . But I neither undressed nor lay down.

I sat down on a chair, remaining on it long, like one under a spell. . . . What I felt was so new, so sweet! I sat motionless, looking round me, taking deep breaths, every now and then giving vent to soundless laughter at some recollection, or going all cold inside, as I thought: now I am in love, so this is what it is like, love. Zinaida's face floated gently before my eyes, never quite out of

sight, her lips smiled mysteriously, she looked at me from the corners of her eyes, interrogative, musing, affectionate . . . as she had when she bade me good-bye. At last I got up, went on tiptoe towards my bed, carefully, without taking my clothes off, laid my head on the pillow, as if afraid an abrupt movement would disturb that with which I was filled to the brim. . . .

I lay down but did not even close my eyes. Soon I noticed that faint reflections were stealing into the room. I sat up and looked towards the window. Its frame stood out distinctly against the mysterious whiteness of the panes. A storm, I said to myself, and that is exactly what it was; but it was somewhere far away, so far that the sound of thunder did not reach my ears; only faint, long forks of lightning flashed incessantly across the sky; or rather they did not so much flash as quiver and twitch, like the wing of a dying bird. I got out of bed, went over to the window, and stood there till daylight. . . . The lightning did not stop for a single instant; it was what the Russian country-folk call a "sparrow's night." I gazed at the mute stretch of sand, at the massed shadows in Neskuchny Gardens, at the pale-yellow façades of distant buildings, which seemed to quiver with each faint flash of lightning. . . . I gazed and could not tear myself away from the sight; those mute lightnings, that restrained brilliance, seemed like a response to the mute, mysterious impulses flashing within me. The day was beginning; the dawn showed in crimson patches. With the approach of the sun the flashes of lightning grew paler and shorter; they quivered at longer and longer intervals, until they finally disappeared in the sober, prosaic light of the coming day. . . .

The lightning within me disappeared, too. I felt a great fatigue and stillness . . . but the image of Zinaida continued to hover triumphantly over my soul. This image, however, seemed calm now; like the swan rising from

the reeds, it detached itself from its unbeautiful surroundings, and as I fell asleep, I once more prostrated myself before it in trusting adoration. . . .

Oh, submissive emotions, low sounds, gentleness and serenity of a soul deeply moved, the melting radiance of first love—where are you now, where?

VIII

The next morning, when I came down to tea, my mother scolded me, though less than I had expected, and made me tell her how I had spent the evening. I told her briefly, omitting most of the details and endeavouring to make it all sound as innocent as possible.

"But still they're not quite *comme il faut*," remarked my mother, "and you have no call to hang round them, you have your examinations to prepare for."

Being well aware that my mother's anxiety about my studies would not go further than these few words, I did not take the trouble to argue with her; but after morning tea, my father, taking my arm, led me into the garden and made me tell him all I had seen at the Zasekins'.

My father had a strange influence over me, and our relations were altogether strange. He took scarcely any interest in my education, but at the same time never said anything to wound me; he respected my liberty, he was even, if the expression is permissible, polite to me . . . but he never admitted me to the slightest intimacy. I loved him, I admired him, I considered him the embodiment of masculine excellence, and oh, how I could have worshipped him but for my constant awareness of being kept deliberately at arm's length! When he wished to, he could instantaneously, with a single word, a single gesture, instil in me boundless confidence. At such moments my soul would expand, and I would chatter away,

as I would with an intelligent friend or indulgent mentor.... And then, with the same abruptness, he would abandon me, and once again I would feel myself repulsed—very kindly and gently, but nevertheless repulsed.

A mood of gaiety would sometimes come over him and then he could romp and gambol with me like a boy (he was fond of every form of violent physical exercise); and once—only once!—he fondled me so lovingly that I nearly wept.... But both his gaiety and his moods of tenderness vanished without leaving any trace, and I could never find any hopes for the future on what passed between us—it all seemed to have been nothing but a dream. Sometimes I would gaze at his clever, handsome, serene face, till my heart throbbed and my whole being strained towards him ... and he, as if guessing what was going on within me, would stroke my cheek casually, and either go out of the room and busy himself over something, or suddenly freeze, as only he could freeze, when I would immediately shrink and freeze, too. His rare fits of indulgence towards myself were never caused by my mute though perfectly obvious prayers; they always came unexpectedly.

Thinking over my father's character in later life, I came to the conclusion that he had other things beside me—and our domestic life—to think of; his heart was in something quite different, something which he enjoyed to the full. "Take what you can," he once said to me, "but never surrender your own self. To belong entirely to oneself—that is what constitutes the thing we call life." Another time, in my capacity of youthful democrat, I began to hold forth on freedom in his presence (he was in one of his "kind" moods that day, when one could say what one liked to him). "Freedom," he repeated. "And do you know the only thing that can give man freedom?"

"What's that?"

"Will, his own will, and it will give him power, too, which is better than any freedom. Learn to know what you want, and you will be free and able to command others."

My father's first and foremost aim was to live, and live he did; perhaps he had a foreboding that he had not much time to enjoy "the thing we call life": he died at the age of forty-two.

I gave my father a full description of my visit to the Zasekins. He listened to me with a kind of absent-minded attention, sitting on a bench and drawing in the sand with the end of his riding-crop. He laughed once or twice, cast a bright, amused glance at me, egging me on with brief questions and remarks. At first I hardly ventured so much as to utter Zinaida's name, but soon could restrain myself no longer and began singing her praises. My father kept chuckling to himself. Then, becoming thoughtful, he stretched and rose from the bench.

I remembered that, while leaving the house, he had ordered his horse to be saddled. He was an excellent horseman and could break in the most savage horses long before Mr. Reri displayed his skill.

"Shall I go with you, Father?" I asked.

"No," he said, and his face assumed its usual expression of affectionate indifference. "You can go alone if you want to; and tell the groom I shan't be riding."

Turning his back on me, he walked briskly away. I followed him with my eyes till he passed through the gate and disappeared. I saw his hat moving along the top of the fence; then I saw him walk into the Zasekins' house.

He was there less than an hour, and on leaving went straight to town, returning home only towards the evening.

After dinner I went to the Zasekins' myself. I found the old Princess alone in the drawing-room. When she

saw me, she scratched her head under her cap with the end of a knitting-needle and asked me abruptly if I could copy out an application for her.

"With pleasure," I replied, sitting down on the edge of a chair.

"Mind you make the letters big enough," said the Princess, handing me a page scribbled all over. "And do you think you could have it ready today, young sir?"

"Yes, I'll do it today."

The door of the next room opened a crack, and Zinaida's face, pale, thoughtful, with the hair combed carelessly back, appeared in the opening; she glanced at me from big cold eyes and quietly closed the door.

"Zina! I say, Zina!" cried her mother. But Zina made no answer. I took the old woman's application home with me and spent the rest of the evening over it.

IX

My "passion" dated from that day. I think my feelings must have been something like those of a man starting upon a career of service. I was no longer just a young boy; I was a lover. I have said that my passion dated from that day, but I ought to add that my sufferings, too, began on that day. I pined when I was away from Zinaida; I could not concentrate, I could do nothing but think of her all day long. . . . I pined when I was away from her . . . but her presence brought me no relief, either. I was jealous, conscious of my own insignificance, sulked foolishly, and prostrated myself before her no less foolishly; but an irresistible force drew me to her, and every time I could not cross the threshold of her room without a joyous pang. Zinaida very soon divined that I was in love with her, indeed I had no thought of concealment; she made merry over my infatuation, fooled,

petted and tormented me in turns. It is sweet to be the sole source, the absolute and unchallengeable cause of the greatest happiness or the profoundest grief of another—and Zinaida found me as wax in her hands. But I was not the only one in love with her: all the men who visited the house raved about her, and she kept them all on a tether—at her feet. It amused her to excite in them hopes and misgivings by turns, to twist them round her little finger (she called it knocking people against one another), and they had no thought of resistance and submitted gladly to her will. Her vivacious and lovely being was imbued with an entrancing blend of cunning and recklessness, of artificiality and simplicity, of tranquility and animal spirits; over everything she said or did, over all her movements, there seemed to hover a light, subtle grace; a peculiar power was in play everywhere. And her face, which changed constantly, also seemed to be in play; it expressed almost instantaneously derision, thought and fervour. The most conflicting emotions, light and swift as the shadows of clouds on a sunny windy day, seemed to be ever chasing one another over her eyes and lips.

Each of her admirers was necessary to her. Belovzorov, whom she called "My Beast," or sometimes simply "Mine," would have rushed into the flames for her; not relying upon his mental powers or other qualities, he kept offering her his hand, hinting that the others were not serious. Maidanov answered to the poetic strain in her; though, like most authors, cold by nature, he assured her earnestly, and himself too, perhaps, that he adored her, eulogizing her in endless poetic effusions, which he recited to her with a kind of ecstasy that was at once affected and sincere. And she, while feeling a certain sympathy for him, treated him with a shade of mockery; she had not much faith in him, and after listening to his effusions, made him recite Pushkin, to clear

the atmosphere, as she said. Lushin, the droll doctor, whose words sounded so cynical, understood her better and loved her more than all the rest, though he abused her, both to her face and behind her back. She respected him, but showed him no mercy and found a malicious delight in letting him see that he, too, was in her power. "I am a flirt, I have no heart, I am an actress by nature," she once said to him in my presence. "Very well, then! Give me your hand, now, and I will stick a pin into it; you will feel humiliated before the young man here, you will feel pain, and yet you will be so good as to laugh, Monsieur Truthful." Lushin flushed up, averted his face, bit his lip, but ended by stretching his hand out to her. She pricked it, and he actually laughed . . . and she laughed too, thrusting the pin deep into his flesh and looking into his eyes, which he vainly tried to keep away from her face. . . . Least of all could I understand her relations with Count Malevsky. He was good-looking, alert, and intelligent, but there was something dubious, something false about him which even I, a lad of sixteen, could feel, and I could not help marvelling that Zinaida failed to notice it. But who knows—perhaps she noticed the falseness and did not mind it! The defects of her education, her strange acquaintances and habits, the constant presence of her mother, the poverty and disorder in the house, everything, from the freedom which this young girl enjoyed to the consciousness of her superiority over those surrounding her, had developed a kind of half-contemptuous negligence and moral callousness in her. Whatever happened in their household, whether Vonifaty came to announce there was no sugar, or some shabby piece of gossip came to light, or her guests quarrelled among themselves, she only tossed her curls and said: "Nonsense!" refusing to be moved.

As for me, my blood boiled whenever Malevsky stole up to her, sly as a fox, lolled elegantly over the back

of her chair, and began whispering in her ear with a complacent and unctuous simper, while she, her arms folded, looked at him gravely, smiling and shaking her head from side to side.

"What makes you receive Count Malevsky?" I once asked her.

"He has such a darling little moustache, you see," she answered. "But of course you wouldn't understand that."

"You don't mean to say you think I'm in love with him?" she volunteered another time. "No, I could never love a man like that, a man I can't help looking down on. I need someone capable of breaking my will. But I shall never come across such a person, thank God! I'm not going to fall into anyone's talons, not I!"

"Does that mean you will never love anyone?"

"What about you? Don't I love you?" she retorted, flicking my nose with her glove.

Oh yes, Zinaida got a lot of entertainment at my expense. For three weeks I saw her every day, and the life she led me during that time! She did not often come to our house, and I was not sorry for it, for whenever she did, she acted the young lady, the Princess, and I turned shy. I was afraid of giving myself away before my mother, who thoroughly disapproved of Zinaida and watched us with hostile eyes.

I did not mind my father nearly as much; he ignored me, and scarcely spoke to her, but when he did, it was always to say something clever and pointed. I gave up study and reading, I even gave up my country rambles and my riding. Like a beetle fastened by the leg I spun around the beloved annex; I would have stayed there forever, if that had been possible ... but my mother grumbled and Zinaida herself sometimes drove me away. When she did this, I locked myself up in my room or went to the farthest end of the garden, where I clambered

up on to the crumbling wall of the high, brick-built conservatory and sat there for hours, my legs dangling over the wall on the side-facing the road, gazing in front of me with unseeing eyes. White butterflies fluttered languidly over the dusty nettles; a perky little sparrow alighted on a broken brick near by, chirruping exasperatingly, turning round and round, and spreading its tail; the crows, who still regarded me with suspicion, cawed now and then from the bare top of a birch, and the sun and wind played among its thin branches; sometimes the calm, austere boom of the bells from the Donskoi Monastery reached my ears, and I would sit there looking and listening, my heart overflowing with a sensation I could not define; it embraced everything—sadness and joy, anxious forebodings, desire for life, and fear of life. But I understood nothing of all this at the time, and would not have been able to put a name to what was fermenting within me, or, if I had tried, would have found one name for it all—Zinaida.

And all the while Zinaida played with me as a cat plays with a mouse. She flirted with me, and I immediately melted and became agitated, or she suddenly repulsed me, and I did not dare to approach her or even look at her.

I remember she was very distant with me for several days running; I lost heart, and sneaking timidly into the annex, tried to keep near the old Princess, although she was in the worst of tempers at the time; her financial affairs were very bad, and she had twice been obliged to explain her situation at the local police station.

Once, passing the familiar garden-fence, I caught sight of Zinaida; she was sitting motionless on the grass, leaning back on her hands. I made as if to go quietly away, but she suddenly lifted her head, motioning to me imperiously. I stood rooted to the ground; I

was not quite sure what her gesture meant. She repeated it. I promptly leaped over the palings and ran joyously towards her; but she stopped me with her eyes, pointing towards the path two paces from where she was sitting. Perplexed and abashed, I knelt at the side of the path. She was so pale, every feature of her face breathed such bitter grief, such profound weariness that it wrung my heart, and I could not help asking:

"What's the matter?"

Zinaida stretched out her hand, plucked a blade of grass, chewed it, and flung it away from her.

"You love me very much, don't you?" she asked at last.

"You do, don't you?"

I did not answer, there was no need to do so.

"Yes," she said, still looking at me, "I know you do. The same eyes," she added, turning thoughtful and covering her face with her hands. "I'm sick of it all," she whispered. "I'd like to go to the end of the world, I can't stand it any longer, I can't bear it.... And what's in store for me?... Oh, I'm so unhappy, so unhappy!"

"But why?" I asked timidly.

For all answer, Zinaida shrugged her shoulders. I remained kneeling, gazing at her in profound misery. Every word she said pierced my heart. I would have given my life at that moment to relieve her sorrow. I looked at her, still unable to think what could have made her so unhappy, and vividly imagined how, in a fit of uncontrollable sadness, she had gone out into the garden and dropped to the ground as if shot. All around was so green, so radiant; a breeze ruffled the leaves, every now and then shaking the raspberry canes above Zinaida's head.

Doves cooed in the distance, and the bees murmured, flying low over the sparse grass. The blue sky shed its kindly radiance from above, but I felt so melancholy....

"Do you feel like reciting some poetry?" asked Zinaida gently, supporting herself on one elbow. "I like to hear you recite. You chant, rather, it's true, but I don't mind it, it's so very young. Recite 'The Hills of Georgia.' Only do sit down, first."

I sat down and recited "The Hills of Georgia."

"'For not to love is quite beyond its powers,'" Zinaida repeated the last line. "That is what we love poetry for: it treats of unreal things and makes them sound not only better but even more real than real things. . . . 'For not to love is quite beyond its powers'—that's it, the heart would like not to love, but it can't help loving." She fell silent again, then with a sudden start got on to her feet. "Come on! Maidanov is sitting with my mother; he brought me his poem, and I went away. He's upset, too. . . . But it can't be helped! One day you'll know all . . . don't be angry with me, now!"

Giving a quick pressure to my hand, Zinaida ran ahead. We went back to the annex together. Maidanov began reading us his *Assassin*, which had just come out, but I did not listen to him. He declaimed his four-foot iambs in a sing-song voice, the rhymes alternating and jingling like sleigh-bells, loud and empty, while I studied Zinaida's face, trying to probe the meaning of what she had been saying to me.

*Or is it that a secret rival
Has overwhelmed you all at once?*

Maidanov suddenly declaimed in nasal accents, and my eyes met Zinaida's. She lowered hers, reddening slightly. I saw her flush and went numb with fear. I had been jealous before, but never before had the idea that she might have fallen in love crossed my mind. "Why! She is in love!"

My real tortures only began then. I racked my brains thinking, turning things over, and kept a constant watch, as secretly as I could, over Zinaida. Some change had come over her—that was quite evident. She now went for long, solitary walks. Sometimes she did not come out to her visitors, locking herself up in her room by the hour. That was not like her. All of a sudden I became, or at least so I imagined, extraordinarily perspicacious. "Was this the one? Or that?" I kept asking myself, shifting my suspicions anxiously from one admirer to another. Count Malevsky (though the admission made me blush for Zinaida) seemed to me the most dangerous of all.

I was doubtless not very acute, and my secretiveness could have hardly deceived anyone; Dr. Lushin, for one, very soon saw through me. But he, too, had changed considerably of late; he had grown thinner, and though he laughed as much as ever, his laughter was now hollow, bitter, and brief, and his former light irony and forced cynicism had given place to a nervous irritability he seemed unable to repress.

"What makes you come here so often, young man?" he once said to me when we were alone in the Zasekin drawing-room. (The young Princess had not returned from her walk, but we could hear the shrill voice of her mother from the mezzanine, scolding her maid.) "You ought to be studying, working, while you are still young—and what d'you think you're doing?"

"How do you know I don't work when I'm at home?" I answered, trying to sound supercilious and only succeeding in betraying my confusion.

"Oh, don't I? No, no, it's not work you're thinking about. I won't argue with you . . . at your age it's only natural. But your choice is so very unfortunate. Don't you see what sort of household this is?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," I said.

"You don't? So much the worse for you! I consider it my duty to warn you. Old bachelors like myself may visit here with impunity. We are a hardened lot, nothing can hurt us, but your skin is still tender. The air here is bad for you, believe me; you may catch the infection."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you what I mean. Do you consider your present state as healthy? Is it normal? Do you really think all you're going through just now is good for you? Do you?"

"Why, what am I going through?" I asked, although in the depths of my heart I knew the doctor was right.

"Young man, young man!" continued the doctor, stressing the words as if they contained something extremely humiliating for me. "Diplomacy isn't your line. Your face is still the mirror of your soul, and thank God for that! But what's the use of talking! I wouldn't be hanging about here if I weren't..." (the doctor ground his teeth) "if I weren't the same sort of fool myself. One thing I can't help wondering at: that an intelligent person like yourself can remain ignorant of what is going on here."

"What *is* going on?" I reiterated, on the alert at once.

The doctor cast a glance of quizzical compassion at me.

"I'm a fine fellow, after all," he said as if to himself. "Why should I tell him? In a word," he added, raising his voice, "I repeat: this atmosphere is bad for you. You may enjoy it, but what of that! A hot-house smells nice, too, but you can't live in a hot-house. Listen to me, my friend, take up your Kaidanov again."

At this moment the old Princess came in to complain to the doctor of toothache. Then Zinaida appeared.

"There," said her mother, "give her a good scolding, Doctor. She drinks iced water all day long. Is it good for her with her weak chest?"

"Why do you do that?" asked the doctor.

"And what harm can it do me?"

"Harm? You might catch cold and die."

"Do you mean it? Really? Well, I wouldn't mind that much."

"So that's how it is," the doctor muttered. Her mother left the room.

"Yes, that's how it is," said Zinaida. "Is life such a fine thing, after all? Look round you. . . . Are things so good? Do you think I can't understand, can't feel? Drinking iced water gives me pleasure, and you come and gravely assure me that I ought not to risk my life, such as it is, for a moment of pleasure—I say nothing of happiness."

"I see," remarked Lushin, "whims and independence, these words sum you up—your whole nature is in them."

Zinaida laughed nervously.

"You're behind the times, my dear Doctor. You're a poor observer, you're out of date. Put on your glasses and you'll see that I am in no mood for whims now. It's intensely entertaining to fool you all, and myself into the bargain, but as for independence. . . . Monsieur Volde-mar," she said suddenly, stamping her small foot, "stop pulling a long face! I can't stand being pitied!" She walked rapidly away.

"The atmosphere is bad for you, young man, very bad," repeated Dr. Lushin.

XI

That evening the usual guests assembled at the Zasekins'; I was among them.

The conversation turned on Maidanov's poem; Zinaida praised it sincerely. "But I'll tell you what!" she said. "If I were a poet, I would choose quite different subjects. Perhaps it's all nonsense, but strange thoughts come into my head, especially when I can't sleep, just before day-

break, when the sky turns all pink and grey. For example, I would. . . . But I'm afraid you'll laugh at me!"

"No, we won't!" we cried, all speaking at once.

"I would describe," she went on, folding her arms and looking away, "a company of young girls in a great boat at night on a calm stream. The moon is shining, they are all in white, with wreaths of white flowers, and they sing a kind of hymn or something."

"I see, I see, go on," drawled Maidanov with dreamy significance.

"Suddenly—noise, laughter, torches and the sound of a tambourine on the shore. . . . A crowd of bacchants comes running, singing, shouting. It is for you, Mr. Poet, to paint the picture . . . only I would like the torches to be very red and smoke terribly, and the bacchants' eyes to shine beneath their wreaths, and the wreaths themselves must be dark. Don't forget tiger-skins, goblets, and gold, lots of gold."

"Where would you put the gold?" asked Maidanov, tossing back his straight hair, his nostrils dilating.

"Where? On their shoulders, arms, legs, everywhere! They say women used to wear anklets of gold in the olden times. The bacchants call to the maidens in the boat. The maidens have stopped singing—they cannot go on—but they sit motionless; they drift towards the shore. And all of a sudden, one of them gets up gently. . . . This needs a masterful description: the way she gets quietly up, in the moonlight, the panic among her companions. . . . She steps over the side of the boat, the bacchants cluster round her and carry her away, into the night, into the dark. . . . I can see smoke, clouds of smoke, confusion. . . . And through it all the shrieks of the bacchants, and her white wreath lying on the shore."

Zinaida stopped speaking. "She is in love!" I said to myself again.

"Is that all?" asked Maidanov.

"That's all," she answered.

"It isn't a subject for a long poem," he remarked pompously, "but I might use your idea for a lyrical work."

"In the romantic vein?" asked Malevsky.

"In the romantic vein, of course, Byronic."

"I prefer Victor Hugo to Byron," the young Count dropped out carelessly, "he's more interesting."

"Victor Hugo is a first-rate writer," said Maidanov, "and my friend Tonkosheyev, in his Spanish novel *El Trovador*—"

"Do you mean the book with the question-marks upside down?" interrupted Zinaida.

"Yes, it is a custom with the Spanish. I was going to say that Tonkosheyev—"

"Oh, now you're going to begin arguing about classicism and romanticism again!" said Zinaida, interrupting him once more. "We'd better play at something. . . ."

"Forfeits?" asked Lushin.

"No, I'm sick of forfeits; let's play similes." (This was a game of Zinaida's invention: an object was selected and everyone had to find a simile for it, the one whose simile was the happiest receiving a prize.) She walked up to the window. The sun had just set; long crimson clouds stretched high up in the sky.

"What are those clouds like?" asked Zinaida, and without waiting for anyone to answer, said: "To me they are like the crimson sails on Cleopatra's golden barge, when she sailed to meet Antony. You told me about it not long ago, Maidanov, do you remember?"

And we all, like Polonius, decided there and then that the clouds exactly resembled those sails, and that no one could find a better simile.

"How old was Antony then?" asked Zinaida.

"Quite a young man, probably," replied Malevsky.

"Yes, he was young," said Maidanov positively.

"Excuse me," said Lushin, "he was over forty."

"Over forty!" echoed Zinaida, darting a swift glance at Lushin.

Soon after that I went home. "She is in love," I whispered involuntarily, "but with whom is she in love?"

XII

The days passed, and Zinaida became ever stranger and more incomprehensible. I went into her room once and found her sitting on a wicker chair, her head pressed against the hard edge of the table. She sat up, and I saw that her cheeks were wet with tears.

"Oh, it's you," she said, smiling spitefully. "Come here!"

I went up to her; she put her hand on my head and, catching hold of a lock of my hair, began twisting it.

"You're hurting me," I said at last.

"Oh, it hurts, does it? And do you think I don't suffer?" she said.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly as she saw she had pulled out a tuft of hair by the roots. "Look what I've done! Poor Monsieur Voldemar!"

Carefully smoothing out the tuft, she wound it round her finger, making a ring of it.

"I will put your hair in my locket and wear it," she said, her eyes glistening with tears. "Perhaps that will give you some comfort. . . . Now, go!"

There was trouble at home when I returned. My father and mother were having some kind of an explanation; she was reproaching him for something, while he, as usual, coldly and politely held his peace, and soon left. I could not hear what it was my mother said, besides I had other things to think of; all I remember is that after this explanation she summoned me into her room and expressed her displeasure at my frequent visits to the Princess, who,

according to her, was *une femme capable de tout*. I kissed her hand (I always resorted to this when I wished to put a stop to the conversation) and went to my room. Zinaida's tears had completely baffled me; I did not know what to think of them and was ready to cry myself: notwithstanding my sixteen years, I was still only a child. I no longer thought of Malevsky, though Belovzorov was growing more savage every day, staring at the sleek Count as a wolf stares at a lamb; in fact, I thought of nothing and no one. I lost myself in surmises and sought secluded spots. I acquired a special fondness for the broken-down conservatory. I would clamber up its high wall and sit there, a sad, lonely youth, feeling exceedingly sorry for myself—and how I enjoyed these melancholy sensations, how I wallowed in them!

One day I sat on the wall, looking into the distance and listening to the tolling of the church-bell. . . . Suddenly I was aware of a creepy sensation in my skin—it was not a passing breeze and it was not a shudder, it was a feeling that someone was near me. . . . I looked down. Zinaida was hurrying along the road beneath me in a light-grey dress, with a pink sunshade resting on one shoulder. She saw me, too, and stopped, turning up the brim of her straw hat and raising her velvety eyes to me.

"What are you doing up there?" she asked, smiling strangely. "There!" she said. "You are always assuring me of your love—well, if you really love me, jump down on to the road."

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when I flew down, as if pushed from behind. The wall was about fourteen feet high. I fell on my feet, but the shock was so violent that I could not remain standing, and fell, losing consciousness for a moment. When I came to, without opening my eyes, I felt Zinaida's presence near me. "Oh, my darling!" she was saying, bending over me, and her voice sounded anxious and affectionate. "How could you

do such a thing, why did you listen to me? You know I love you! Do get up!"

I could feel her bosom heaving so near me, her hands touching my head, and then—oh, then!—her soft, fresh lips showered kisses on my face, they even touched my own lips. . . . But Zinaida must have seen, by the expression of my face, that I was no longer unconscious, for she rose abruptly, saying:

"Well, get up, you naughty boy, you mad creature! Don't lie there in the dust!" I got to my feet. "Give me my sunshade," said Zinaida, "see where I dropped it! And stop looking at me like that . . . it's silly! Did you hurt yourself? I suppose you got stung by the nettles! Don't you look at me like that, I tell you! But there, he doesn't hear me, he can't even answer," she added, as if to herself. "Go home, now, Monsieur Voldemar, brush your clothes, and mind you don't follow me, or I'll be angry and never again. . . ."

Without finishing the sentence she walked away at a brisk pace, while I sat down by the roadside, for my knees were shaking. My hands had been stung by the nettles, my back ached, and my head was reeling, but never since have I experienced such bliss as I did then. I could feel it like a sweet pain in all my limbs, and finally it vented itself in ecstatic leaps and cries. In very truth I was still but a child.

XIII

I was so proud and happy all that day, the sensation of Zinaida's kisses on my face was still so vivid, I recalled every word she had said to me with such quivering ecstasy, cherished my sudden good fortune so lovingly, that I was almost frightened and did not even want to see her—the source of all these new sensations. I felt as

if I had nothing more to ask of fate, as if it was time for me to "draw one last breath and die." The next day, however, as I set off for the annex, I felt exceedingly self-conscious and tried in vain to conceal this beneath a cloak of modest familiarity, which I considered suitable to one desirous of showing that he can keep a secret. Zinaida received me just as usual, without the slightest sign of emotion, only shaking her finger at me and asking me if I had any bruises. My air of modest familiarity and mystery deserted me instantly, and with it my self-consciousness. I had not expected any particular demonstration, of course, and yet Zinaida's calm reception acted upon me like a cold douche: I realized that I was nothing but a child in her eyes—and how sad this made me! Zinaida paced up and down the floor, bestowing a fleeting smile upon me every time her eyes rested on me, but her thoughts were far away, I could see that. "Should I mention yesterday's affair myself?" I mused. "Ask her where she had been going in such a hurry, just to put an end to my doubts?..." But I discarded the idea and seated myself quietly in an obscure corner of the room.

Belovzorov came in and I was actually glad to see him.

"I couldn't find a saddle-horse quiet enough to carry you," he said austerely. "Freytag vouches for one, but I am not sure of its temper. I'm afraid."

"And what are you afraid of?" asked Zinaida. "Be so good as to explain."

"Why? You see, you can't really ride. Supposing anything happened to you, which God forbid! And what makes you want to ride all of a sudden?"

"That is no concern of yours, My dear Mr. Beast. But of course I could ask Pyotr Vasilyevich. . . ." (My father's name was Pyotr Vasilyevich. I was amazed at the easy, careless way she used it, as if confident of his readiness to oblige her.)



"I see," said Belovzorov, "so it's *him* you want to go riding with!"

"Whether I ride with him or with anyone else, makes no difference to you. It won't be with you, anyhow."

"Not with me," echoed Belovzorov. "Just as you like. All right, I'll get a horse for you."

"And mind it *is* a horse, and not a cow. I warn you I mean to gallop."

"Gallop away, then! Is it Malevsky you want to gallop with?"

"And why not with Malevsky, my brave soldier? Now, now, calm yourself, don't glare like that! I'll take you, too. You know what Malevsky is to me now—ugh!" She tossed her head.

"You only say that to console me," grumbled Belovzorov.

Zinaida looked at him with narrowed eyes.

"And does it console you? Oh, you . . . soldier!" she said, bringing out the last word as if unable to find any other epithet. "And you, Monsieur Voldemar, will you come with us?"

"I . . . I don't like being with a lot of people. . ." I muttered, not daring to lift my eyes.

"Oh, you would prefer a *tête-à-tête*, would you? Very well, each to his own," she sighed. "Go on, then, Belovzorov, see what you can do! I shall want the horse tomorrow."

"And where is the money to come from?" interpolated the old Princess.

Zinaida frowned.

"I shan't ask you for it. Belovzorov will trust me."

"Trust . . . trust," muttered the Princess, and suddenly shouted at the top of her voice: "Dunyashka!"

"*Maman*—what did I give you a bell for?" expostulated her daughter.

"Dunyashka!" called the old woman again.

Belovzorov took his leave; I went out with him. . . .
Zinaida made no attempt to keep me.

XIV

I got up early next morning, cut myself a stick, and sauntered out of the city gates. I would go out, I told myself, and try and shake off my grief. It was a fine day, bright and not too warm; there was a fresh, sportive ground breeze, rustling with gentle playfulness, stirring everything, disturbing nothing. I roamed long over hills and through woods, I did not feel happy, for I had gone out determined to give myself up to grief; but youth, the beautiful weather, the fresh air, the pleasure of rapid walking, the luxury of reposing in solitude on the dense grass, had their effect; the thought of those unforgettable words, of those kisses, once more filled my soul. I dwelt with satisfaction on the thought that Zinaida would not be able to deny that I had both resolution and courage. . . . "She prefers others to me—well and good! But others only talk of what they would do, while *I* acted! And that was nothing in comparison with what I am capable of doing for her sake. . . ."

I gave free rein to my fancy, imagining myself saving her from the hands of enemies, seeing myself covered with blood from head to foot, rescuing her from some dungeon, dying at her feet. I remembered the picture of Malec-Adel bearing Matilde away on his horse, which hung on the drawing-room wall, and then my attention was attracted to a large speckled woodpecker, fussy ascending the trunk of a slender birch-tree, anxiously peering out, first on one side, then on the other, like a double-bass player seated behind his instrument.

Then I sang " 'Twas not the white snow," which led me

to a ballad popular at the time: "I await thee, whilst the playful breeze"; then I began shouting out Yermak's address to the stars, from Khomyakov's tragedy; I tried to invent something myself in a sentimental vein, even going so far as to compose the line with which the poem was to conclude—"Oh, Zinaida, Zinaida!" but nothing came of the attempt. And now the dinner-hour was approaching. I descended to the valley, along which a narrow sandy path wound its way to the town. While I was still on this path I heard the hollow sound of horses' hoofs behind me. Looking back, I involuntarily halted and took off my cap, for the riders were Zinaida and my father. They were riding side by side. My father was saying something to her, leaning over in the saddle, his hand resting on the neck of his horse; he was smiling; Zinaida listened to him in silence, her eyes austere lowered, her lips compressed. At first I only saw the two of them, but a few seconds later I caught sight of Belovzorov, who had been hidden by a turn of the path, riding a fiery coal-black horse and clad in his Hussar's uniform and fur-trimmed cloak. His good steed tossed its head, snorting and prancing, its rider reining it in and urging it forward with his spurs at the same time. I stepped to the side of the path. My father gathered up the reins and moved away from Zinaida who directed a slow glance at him—and they galloped past me. Belovzorov dashed after them, his sword clattering. . . . "He's as red as a lobster," I thought, "and she—why is she so pale? Riding all the morning, and pale?"

I redoubled my steps and got home just in time for dinner. My father had already changed, and was seated, washed and refreshed, beside my mother's arm-chair, reading an article from the *Journal des Débats* to her in his mellow, even voice. My mother was listening absently, and asked me as soon as I appeared what I had been doing all this time, adding that she hated people

hanging about goodness knows where and goodness knows in what company. It was on the tip of my tongue to say I had been out for a walk all by myself, but a glance at my father made me decide to hold my tongue.

XV

During the next five or six days I hardly saw Zinaida: she pleaded illness, but this did not prevent the usual frequenters of the annex from "going on duty," as they called it—all of them, that is to say, with the exception of Maidanov, who always lost heart and fell into dejection as soon as there was no cause about which he could be enthusiastic. Belovzorov sulked in his corner, red-faced and buttoned up to the neck. A sneering smile flickered continually over the subtle features of Count Malevsky; he really had fallen into disgrace with Zinaida, and was more obliging than ever to the old Princess; he actually drove her to the Governor-General in a hired carriage; but the visit turned out a failure and even led to unpleasantness for Malevsky himself, who was reminded of an incident involving certain artillery officers and could only plead his inexperience at the time in his defence. Lushin called once or twice a day, but never stayed long; I was rather afraid of him since our last talk and at the same time was genuinely attracted to him. Once he went for a walk with me in Neskuchny Gardens, and was very amiable and good-natured, telling me the names and peculiarities of the various plants and flowers, suddenly interrupting himself to smite his brow and exclaim, with complete irrelevance: "Fool that I was, I thought her a mere flirt! There are evidently people who enjoy sacrificing themselves."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"Nothing—for your ears, anyhow!" Lushin answered sharply.

Zinaida avoided me. I could not fail to notice that the sight of me was disagreeable to her. She seemed to avert her face from me instinctively; and it was this that was so painful, so hard to bear. But there was no help for it, and I strove to keep out of her sight, only watching her from afar, but in this I did not always succeed. There was still something inexplicable going on within her: her face was different, her whole bearing was changed. The change in her came home to me with especial force one warm, still evening. I was sitting on a low bench beneath a spreading elder-bush; it was a favourite spot of mine: I could see Zinaida's window from there. As I sat there, a small bird flitted about among the darkening leaves over my head; a grey cat, elongating its back, crept stealthily into the garden, and some early cockchafers were filling the air—still limpid, though there was no longer any light—with their ponderous hum. I sat looking at the window, hoping it would open; and soon it really was flung open, and Zinaida appeared in it. She was wearing a white dress, and was herself—her face, her shoulders, her arms—almost as white as the dress. For a long time she stood motionless, gazing steadily from under knitted brows in front of her. I had never seen her gaze like this. Then she clasped her hands tight, raising them to her lips and then to her forehead, and suddenly, spreading her fingers wide, tossed her hair behind her ears, shook her head, gave a single resolute nod, and closed the window with a bang.

Three days later she came across me in the garden. I was going to turn away, but she stopped me.

"Come, give me your hand," she said in her old affectionate manner. "You and I haven't had a nice chat for ages."

I looked at her: her eyes shone with a gentle light, she seemed to be smiling through a mist.

"Are you still unwell?" I asked.

"No, no, that's all over," she said, plucking a small red rose. "I'm a little tired still, but that will pass, too."

"And will you be like you used to be before?" I asked.

Zinaida raised the flower to her face, and it seemed to me that the vivid petals cast their reflections on her cheeks.

"Why, have I changed?"

"You have," I said quietly.

"I've been horrid to you—I know that," said Zinaida, "but you shouldn't have taken any notice. . . . I couldn't help it. . . . But what's the good of talking about it?"

"You don't want me to love you, that's what it is!" I exclaimed moodily, giving way to a sudden impulse.

"Oh, yes, I do, but not the way you loved me before."

"How then?"

"Let's be friends, that's how." Zinaida held out the rose for me to smell. "I'm so much older than you, I could be your aunt, you know; or your elder sister, if you like. And you. . . ."

"And I am only a child for you. . . ."

"Of course you are, but a sweet, good, intelligent child whom I love dearly. I'll tell you what! I appoint you my page from this day; and don't forget that a page must never leave his queen. Here's your badge," she added, putting the rose in my button-hole. "A token of our goodwill towards you."

"You showed me other tokens of goodwill before," I muttered.

"Oh," said Zinaida, "what a memory he has! Well, I don't mind giving you one now. . . ."

And leaning over me, she imprinted a pure, calm kiss on my brow.

I could only look at her, and she turned, saying: "Follow me, my page," and walked towards the annex. I followed her in a state of amazement. "Can it be," I

thought, "that this gentle, sensible girl is the same Zinaida I used to know?" Her very gait seemed calmer to me now, her figure more dignified, more graceful. . . .

But God, how my love for her blazed up!

XVI

After dinner the usual guests assembled in the annex, and the young Princess came out of her room to receive them. They were all there, in full strength, as on that first, unforgettable evening. Even Nirmatsky dragged himself there; Maidanov was the first to come this time, bringing a new poem with him. We played forfeits again, but without the former wild capers, without the fooling and noise—the Gipsy element was gone from our revels. Zinaida set a new tone to the party. I sat next to her in my capacity of her page. Among other penalties she suggested that the one who drew the lot with a mark on it should tell us what he had dreamed. But nothing came of this. The dreams turned out to be either dull (Belovzorov had dreamed that he fed his horse on carp, and that its head was of wood), or unnatural and obvious fabrications. . . . Maidanov entertained us with a regular novel, bristling with funeral vaults, angels with lyres, and talking flowers . . . not to mention distant strains. . . . Zinaida would not let him go on. "Well, if it comes to inventing," she said, "let everyone relate something that never happened at all." Again it fell to Belovzorov's lot to begin.

The young Hussar was completely at a loss. "I can't think of anything," he exclaimed.

"Nonsense!" cried Zinaida. "Imagine you are married, or something like that, and tell us how you would treat your wife. Would you lock her up?"

"Yes, I would."

"And would you sit with her yourself?"

"Certainly I would."

"Very well. And supposing she got tired of it and deceived you?"

"I would kill her."

"And if she ran away?"

"I would run after her and kill her."

"All right. And now supposing *I* were your wife, what would you do?"

Belovzorov was silent for a moment.

"I would kill myself."

Zinaida laughed.

"I see your story is not very long," she said.

The next lot was drawn by Zinaida. She looked up at the ceiling, thinking.

"Now listen," she at last said. "This is what I have made up. Imagine a beautiful palace, a summer night and a wonderful ball. The young Queen is receiving her guests. Everywhere are gold, marble, crystal, silk, lights, diamonds, flowers, incense, every luxury the heart could desire."

"You love luxury, don't you?" interrupted Lushin.

"Luxury is elegant," she retorted, "and I love elegance."

"More than beauty?" he asked.

"You're too clever for me, I don't know what you mean. Now, don't interrupt. And so, the ball is a splendid one. There are hosts of guests, all young, good-looking, brave, and all head over ears in love with the Queen."

"Are there no women among the guests?" asked Malevsky.

"No . . . let me see . . . yes, there are."

"And all very plain?"

"All charming, but the men are all in love with the Queen. She is tall and slender. . . . She wears a small gold diadem on her dark hair."

I looked at Zinaida, and at that moment she seemed to be taller than any of us, her white forehead, her straight eyebrows were stamped with such bright intelligence and power that I thought: "You yourself are that Queen."

"Everyone is crowding round her," Zinaida went on, "with the most flattering speeches."

"So she likes flattery?" asked Lushin.

"Oh, you're impossible, interrupting all the time. . . . Who isn't fond of flattery?"

"One last question," put in Malevsky, "has the Queen a husband?"

"I haven't thought of that. No, what does she want a husband for?"

"Of course," put in Malevsky, "what does she want a husband for?"

"*Silence!*" cried Maidanov, who spoke atrocious French.

"*Merci!*" said Zinaida. "So the Queen sits listening to the flattering speeches and the music, but she does not look at any of her guests. Six tall windows are open from ceiling to floor, and beyond them are the dark sky studded with enormous stars and a dark park with enormous trees in it. The Queen looks out at the park. There, among the trees, is a fountain looming white in the dark, and very tall—as tall as a ghost. The Queen hears through the din of voices and music the quiet splashing of the water; as she looks out of the window she thinks to herself: 'Yes, gentlemen, you are all noble, wise, rich, you cluster round me, you cherish every word I let fall, each of you is ready to die at my feet, you are all in my power . . . but there, by the fountain, by the splashing water, the one I love, the one who has power over me, stands waiting for me. He has neither rich garments nor jewels, and no one knows him, but he stands waiting for me, and he knows I will go out to him. And I will, there is no force strong enough to prevent me if I wish to go out to him, to stay with him, to lose myself with him there, in the darkness

of the park, where the trees are rustling and the fountain splashes its waters. . . .”

Zinaida broke off.

“Is that . . . pure invention?” asked Malevsky insinuatingly.

Zinaida did not deign even to look at him.

“I wonder what we would have done, gentlemen,” said Lushin suddenly, “if we had been among the guests and had known of the fortunate man standing by the fountain?”

“Wait, wait!” interrupted Zinaida, “I’ll tell you myself how each of you would have behaved. You, Belovzorov, would have called him out; you, Maidanov, would have written an epigram on him . . . no, no, you wouldn’t, you can’t write epigrams; you would have composed lengthy iambics, in the manner of Barbier, and published them in the *Telegraph*. You, Nirmatsky, would have borrowed from him, no, you would have lent him money at high interest; as for you, Doctor—” she paused—“I don’t know what you would have done.”

“In my capacity of court-physician,” replied Lushin, “I would probably have advised the Queen not to give a ball when she did not feel in the mood for entertaining.”

“Perhaps you would have been right. What about you, Count?”

“Me?” said the Count with his malevolent smile.

“You would have offered him a poisoned chocolate.”

Malevsky winced and looked very sly, but the next moment burst out laughing.

“As for you, Voldemar. . . .” Zinaida went on, “but I think we’ve had enough of this sort of thing; let’s play at something else.”

“Monsieur Voldemar, as a faithful page, would have held his Queen’s train as she ran off into the park,” said Malevsky venomously.

He flushed crimson, but Zinaida, laying her hand on my

shoulder and getting up, said in a rather shaky voice: "I never gave you the right to be insolent, Count, and I would therefore request you to leave my house." She pointed to the door.

"Really, Princess," muttered Malevsky, turning pale.

"The Princess is quite right!" exclaimed Belovzorov, also getting up.

"I swear I never expected," continued Malevsky, "I did not think there was anything in my words to . . . I did not for a moment intend to give offence . . . I beg your pardon."

Zinaida cast an icy glance at him and laughed coldly. "Stay if you like," she said with a negligent gesture. "Monsieur Voldemar and I were wrong to lose our tempers. You're fond of stinging—sting away, then!"

"I beg your pardon," repeated Malevsky, and I, recalling Zinaida's gesture, told myself that a real queen could not have shown an offender the door with greater majesty.

The game of forfeits did not go on for long after this incident. Everyone felt rather awkward, not so much on account of the little scene just enacted, as from some indefinable but oppressive emotion. No one mentioned it, but everyone was conscious of this emotion and knew that his neighbour shared it. Maidanov recited his poem, and Malevsky praised it with exaggerated enthusiasm.

"How anxious he is to show his good nature now!" Lushin whispered in my ear.

Soon we all went home. Zinaida had turned suddenly thoughtful, and her mother had sent word that she had a headache. Nirmatsky complained of rheumatism.

I could not sleep for a long time—Zinaida's story had made a great impression on me. "Was a hint intended?" I asked myself. "And if so, what and whom was she hinting at? And if there was any truth in it, surely she would not have dared . . . no, no, it's impossible," I whispered, turning continually, with burning cheeks, on my pil-

low. . . . But I remembered the expression on Zinaida's face as she told her story. . . . I remembered Lushin's involuntary exclamation on our walk in Neskuchny Gardens, the sudden changes in her treatment of me . . . and I exhausted myself in surmises.

"Who is *he*?" The words stood constantly before my eyes, as if engraved on the darkness in letters of fire; a low, ominous cloud seemed to be hanging over me, and I kept expecting it to burst any moment. I had become accustomed to a great deal of late, I had seen many strange things at the Zasekins'; the disorder, the tallow candle-ends, the broken knives and forks, the gloomy Vonifaty, the shabby maids, the strange manners of the old Princess, nothing in this eccentric household could astonish me any more. . . . But I could not get used to what I was beginning vaguely to guess at in Zinaida. . . . *Adventuress*, my mother had once called her. She, my idol, my divinity—an adventuress! The word stung me, I tried to escape from it by burying my face in the pillow, I chafed at it . . . and yet, and yet, what would I not have given to be that happy he of the fountain!

My blood surged madly in my veins. "The park . . . the fountain. . ." thought I. "Suppose I go out into the park?" I was dressed in a moment and slipped out. It was a dark night. The trees were whispering almost inaudibly. A still coolness came from above, and the smell of fennel was wafted from the vegetable garden. I visited all the paths; the sound of my own light footsteps at the same time alarmed and cheered me; I stopped to listen to the beating of my heart—full, rapid beats. At last I came up to the fence and leaned against the thin palings. Suddenly—or was it my imagination?—a female form slipped past me. . . . I strained my eyes into the darkness, holding my breath. . . . What was that? Was it the sound of steps, or only the beating of my heart again? "Who's there?" I lisped indistinctly. Again! Was it a stifled laugh . . . or

the rustling of branches . . . or had someone sighed, close to my ear? I was seized with panic. "Who's there?" I repeated still more softly.

A light breeze rose for a moment; something flashed across the sky: a shooting star. "Is it Zinaida?" I wanted to ask, but the words died on my lips. And all of a sudden, as it often happens in the middle of the night, a profound stillness prevailed. . . . Even the grasshoppers stopped chirping in the bushes, and from somewhere came the sound of a window being closed. I stood there for a short time, then returned to my room, to my cold bed. I felt a strange excitement, as if I had kept a tryst but found myself alone, brushing past another's happiness.

XVII

Next day I was only able to catch a glimpse of Zinaida as she and her mother drove by. I did see Lushin, who, however, merely bestowed upon me the briefest of greetings, and I saw Malevsky. The young Count smirked at me and spoke to me in a friendly fashion. Of all the people visiting at the annex he alone had managed to insinuate himself into our house and get into my mother's good graces. My father did not take to him and treated him with an almost insulting politeness.

"*Ah, monsieur le page!*" said Malevsky. "Glad to see you! What is your beauteous queen doing?"

His handsome, healthy face was at that moment so detestable to me, and the look he turned on me was so insultingly facetious, that I made no reply.

"What, still angry with me?" he went on. "You shouldn't be. It wasn't I who called you a page, you know, and it's usually queens who have pages. But allow me to observe that you are somewhat negligent of your duties."

"My duties?"

"Yes. A page should never leave his mistress' side; a page should know what she is doing all the time—should watch all her movements," he added, lowering his voice. "By day—and by night."

"What d'you mean by that?"

"Mean? I should have thought my meaning was clear enough. By day—and by night. The day doesn't matter so much. It is light in the day, and there are always plenty of people about. But in the night—that's when you must be on the alert. I would advise you not to sleep at night, but watch, watch, for all you are worth. Remember the park, the night, the fountain—that is where you should watch. You will thank me for this one day."

Malevsky laughed and turned his back on me. In all probability he did not attach much importance to his words; he enjoyed the reputation of a first-rate hoaxer and was famous for his ability to take people in at masked balls, in which he was greatly aided by the falseness which had become second nature to him. . . . He had only been teasing me, but every word was like a drop of poison in my veins. The blood rushed to my head. "Ha, so that's it, is it!" I said to myself. "Very well! So it was not for nothing that I was drawn towards the park! But I won't have it!" I cried aloud, smiting my chest, though I would not have been able to say exactly what it was I would not have. "Whether I find Malevsky himself in the park," I told myself (perhaps it was his own secret he blurted out, he is brazen enough for that), "or anyone else" (the fence round our garden was low, and there would be no difficulty in climbing over it), "whoever it is, had better look out for himself, it is me he will have to do with! . . . I will prove to the world and to the false one" (yes, that is what I called her!) "that I know how to revenge myself!"

I went back to my room, took out of a drawer in my desk an English penknife which I had purchased a few days ago, felt its sharp blades, and, with knitted brows

and an air of cold, steadfast resolution, as if I were thoroughly accustomed to this sort of thing, slipped it into my pocket. My heart throbbed angrily, and then seemed to turn to stone. I went about all day with knitted brows and tightly compressed lips, pacing up and down the floor of my room, gripping the knife, which had got quite warm in my pocket, and preparing myself for some terrible event. These sensations were so new, so unprecedented that they quite entertained me, and I was so elated by them that I hardly gave a thought to Zinaida herself. I kept picturing to myself Aleko and the young Gipsy—"Whither, young fellow? Lie there! . . ." and then: "You are covered with blood! Oh, what have you done? . . . "Nothing!" With what a cruel smile I repeated that word: "Nothing!" My father was not at home, but my mother, who was now in a perpetual state of repressed irritation, noted my air of fatality and asked me at supper-time:

"You look like a cat watching a mouse—what's the matter?"

For all reply I gave a condescending smile, thinking to myself: "If they only knew!" Eleven o'clock struck; I went up to my room but did not undress. I was waiting for midnight to strike; and at last it struck. "Now!" I whispered through clenched teeth, and made for the garden, having first taken the precaution to button up my jacket and, for some reason, turn up my sleeves.

I had selected in advance the spot where I intended to keep my watch: at the very end of the garden, where the fence dividing our grounds from those of the Zasekins ended in the wall which surrounded both, there stood a solitary fir-tree; by taking up my post beneath its dense low-growing branches I could see all round me, as far as the darkness of the night allowed: there was a little path here which had always seemed mysterious to me; it wound its way snake-like beneath the fence and was trampled at this particular spot by the feet of those who

clambered over the palings; further it led to a circular arbour, formed by the branches of acacias. Reaching this fir-tree, I leaned against its trunk and began my watch.

It was a still night like the one before, but the sky was not so cloudy, and the outlines of the bushes and of the taller flowers showed more distinctly. The first minutes of waiting were wearisome, almost eerie. I was ready to do anything! But I had not quite made up my mind as to the manner in which I ought to proceed. Should I thunder out: "Whither away? Halt! Confess, or die!" or simply stab in the dark? Every sound, every rustle, every flutter seemed to me unusual, significant. . . . I got ready to spring, bending forward. . . . But half an hour passed, then an hour; I grew calmer and cooler; the realization that what I was doing was futile, that I had made a fool of myself, that Malevsky had only been making fun of me, gradually came over me. I abandoned my ambush and made a round of the garden. As if to spite me, there was not a sound to be heard; all was still; even our dog was asleep, curled up in a ball at the garden-gate. I climbed up to the top of the ruined conservatory, gazed at the distant field beneath, remembered my encounter with Zinaida, and fell into a reverie.

Suddenly I started. . . . I thought I could hear the creaking of a door being opened, followed by the light snapping of twigs. . . . In two bounds I was on the ground again and froze to the spot. Light steps, rapid and stealthy, could be distinctly heard in the garden. . . . They were approaching me. "Here he is at last!" flashed across my mind. I pulled the knife convulsively out of my pocket, opened it no less convulsively—red sparks whirled in front of my eyes, my hair stood on end with fear and rage. . . . The steps were approaching the very spot where I was standing—I crouched, straining towards them. . . . The figure of a man appeared—good heavens! It was my father!

I recognized him at once, though he was muffled in a dark cloak and his hat was pulled down over his brows. He passed me on tiptoe. There was nothing to conceal me, but he did not notice me, for I had crouched so low and was so huddled up as to seem almost one with the earth itself. In a single moment the jealous, bloodthirsty Othello was transformed into a schoolboy. . . . The unexpected apparition of my father had so terrified me that at first I did not even notice where he was coming from, or the direction in which he disappeared. It was only when all was quiet again that I allowed my limbs to relax and asked myself what my father could be doing in the garden at night. In my fright I had dropped the knife into the grass but was too much ashamed to look for it. I had sobered down instantaneously. On my way home, however, I went to my bench beneath the elder-bush and looked up at Zinaida's window. The small, slightly convex panes of the window were a dim blue in the feeble light shed by the nocturnal sky. Suddenly their colour changed . . . and behind them—I saw it distinctly—a curtain of some light colour was cautiously and gently lowered till it touched the window-sill, where it hung motionless.

"What does it all mean?" I said aloud, almost involuntarily, when I was back in my own room. "A dream, a chance occurrence, or? . . ." The suspicions which now entered my mind were so new and strange that I scarcely dared to admit them.

XVIII

I got up with an aching head the next morning. The excitement of the day before had vanished. In its place were nothing but painful bewilderment and a melancholy such as I had never before known, as if something within me were dying.

"You look like a rabbit with half its brains removed," said Lushin when we chanced to meet that day.

I shot stealthy glances at my mother and father at the breakfast table. He was calm as usual, she, as usual, full of suppressed irritation. I half expected my father to say a kind word to me, as he sometimes did. . . . But this time he did not even bestow on me his daily cool caress. "Should I tell Zinaida all?" I wondered. . . . "For nothing matters now, all is over between us." I went to her, but not only was unable to tell her anything, I did not even get a chance to speak to her properly. The old Princess' son, a twelve-year-old cadet, had arrived from Petersburg for the holidays. Zinaida at once gave her brother into my charge. "Here's a comrade for you, dearest Volodya."* (She had never called me that before.) "His name is Volodya, too. I hope you'll like him; he's rather shy, but he has a good heart. Show him Neskuchny Gardens, go for walks with him, in a word, take him under your wing. You will, won't you? You're a kind-hearted boy yourself!" She placed her hands affectionately on my shoulders, and I lost my heart to her all over again. The arrival of this boy turned me back into a boy myself. I looked at the cadet in silence, and he stared back as silently. Zinaida burst out laughing and pushed us towards one another. "Come on, children, embrace!" We obeyed.

"Would you like to see the park?" I asked the cadet.

"Yes, please, sir," he answered in a husky voice, like a real cadet. Zinaida laughed again. . . . I noted that her complexion had never been so lovely as it was that day. The cadet and I set off. There was an old swing in our garden; I helped him on to the narrow seat and began swinging him. He sat motionless in his new uniform of thick cloth adorned with broad strips of gold braid, holding on to the ropes with all his might.

* Short for Vladimir.—*Tr.*

"Why don't you unfasten your collar?" I asked.

"Oh, we're used to it," he said, clearing his throat. He was very like his sister, his eyes, in particular, reminded me of hers. I enjoyed looking after him, but the old grief still gnawed at my heart. "Today I'm just a child," I told myself, "while only yesterday. . . ." I remembered the spot where I had dropped my knife and went to look for it. I found it and the cadet begged me for it, broke off a thick stem of hemlock, made himself a whistle and began blowing it. Othello whistled a bit, too.

But in the evening poor Othello wept bitterly in the arms of Zinaida, when, discovering him in a secluded nook in the garden, she asked him what made him look so sad. My tears gushed out so violently that she was quite alarmed. "What's the matter, Voldemar? What is it?" she kept asking, and getting no answer and seeing that I did not stop crying, she tried to kiss my wet cheek. But I turned from her, whispering through my sobs: "I know all. Why did you play with me? What did you need my love for?"

"Yes, I am much to blame, Volodya," said Zinaida, "I know I am," and she clasped her hands. "There is so much that is bad, dark, sinful in me. . . . But I am not playing with your affections now, I really am fond of you, you can have no idea why. . . . But . . . what do you know?"

What was there for me to say? She stood before me, looking at me, and I was hers, all hers, from head to foot, whenever she looked at me. . . . A quarter of an hour later, I was running races with the cadet and Zinaida; I was laughing now, not weeping, but the laughter made the tears spill from swollen eyelids; I wore a ribbon of Zinaida's round my neck instead of a tie, and shouted with joy when I managed to catch her round her waist. She could do what she liked with me.

If I were asked to give a detailed account of my feelings during the week following on my unsuccessful nocturnal expedition, I should not know how to set about it. It was a strange, feverish period, a kind of chaos in which feelings, thoughts, suspicions, hopes, joys and sufferings of the most conflicting nature were caught up in a mad vortex; I was afraid of looking into my heart, if a boy of sixteen may be considered capable of looking into his own heart, afraid of thinking seriously about anything, I simply scrambled through the day as best I could; but I slept well . . . here my childish levity came to my relief. I did not want to know whether I was loved, and I did not want to admit to myself that I was not loved; I avoided my father, but Zinaida I could not avoid. . . . Her presence consumed me like a flame . . . and what did I care what was the fire which burned and melted me, so long as it was sweet to burn and melt? Yielding to every impression as it came, I played hide-and-seek with myself, shunned memories, and closed my eyes to what I felt was in store for me. . . . This feverish state could not have lasted long. A thunder-bolt put a sudden end to it and quite changed the stream of my existence.

Returning to dinner one day, after rather a long walk, I learned to my surprise that I was to dine alone; that my father had gone out, and my mother did not feel well, did not want any dinner, and had locked herself in her bedroom. I could see by the faces of the servants that something unusual had happened. . . . I did not dare to question them, but I had one friend among them, Philip, the young footman, a passionate lover of poetry and a skilled performer on the guitar, and I turned to him. I learned that there had been a terrible scene between my father and my mother (every word of it could be heard in the maids' room; the conversation had been carried on

chiefly in French, but Masha, one of the maids, had worked five years in the house of a seamstress from Paris, and understood it all); that my mother had accused my father of having been unfaithful to her, of carrying on an acquaintance with the next-door young lady; that my father had at first rebutted the charge, but had afterwards flared up himself and said something nasty about "a woman of her age," which had made my mother cry; that my mother had also mentioned a promissory note which my father was supposed to have given the old Princess, adding harsh words about the latter, as well as about the young lady, and it was then that my father had spoken so unkindly.

"And it all started," concluded Philip, "with an anonymous letter; nobody knows who wrote it; that's how it all came out, it never would have come out but for the letter."

"Why—do you mean there was anything?" I forced myself to ask, my feet and hands going cold and a quiver starting somewhere inside me. Philip gave a significant wink.

"There was. You can't conceal that sort of thing; your father was ever so careful this time, but there's always a carriage to be hired, or something . . . you can't do without servants."

I dismissed Philip and threw myself on my bed. I did not burst into tears or give myself up to despair; I did not ask myself how and when had it all happened; I did not ask myself how it was that I had not discovered it long ago—I did not even murmur against my father. . . . What I had just learned was too much for me: the sudden revelation had crushed me. . . . All was over. All my flowers had been torn up by the roots and lay around me, scattered and trampled.

The next day my mother announced her intention of going back to town. My father went into her bedroom in the morning and had a long talk with her. No one heard what he said, but my mother stopped crying; she calmed down and called for her breakfast, without however leaving her room or changing her decision. I remember strolling about all day, but I did not go into the garden, and never so much as glanced in the direction of the annex. And that evening I was the witness of an extraordinary scene: taking Count Malevsky's arm, my father led him out of the drawing-room into the hall and said coldly, in the presence of one of the footmen: "A few days ago Your Honour was shown the door in a certain house; and now, without going into any explanations, it is my privilege to inform you that if you ever try to come here again, I will throw you out of the window. I don't like your handwriting." The Count cringed, ground his teeth, shrugged his shoulders and slunk away.

Preparations began for the move to town, to our house in Arbat Street. My father himself probably had no desire to stay any longer in the country; but he had evidently succeeded in dissuading my mother from making any scandal; everything was done quietly, without haste, my mother even sending her compliments to the Princess and expressing her regret that a slight indisposition prevented her from taking leave of her. I wandered about as if possessed, desiring one thing only—for all this to come to an end as soon as possible. There was one thought I could not shake off—how could she, a young girl, and after all a Princess, have brought herself to act as she had, knowing that my father was not a free man, and well aware that she could easily have married—Belovzorov, for instance! What had she expected to come of it? Did she not fear to ruin her whole future? "There," thought I,

"that's what love is, that's passion, that's devotion!" And Lushin's words came to my mind: "There are evidently people who enjoy sacrificing themselves." Once during this period I caught sight of something pale at one of the annex windows.... "Could it be Zinaida's face?" I wondered ... and that was just what it was. I could no longer restrain myself. I could not bear to part with her without a word of farewell. I watched for an opportunity and made my way to the annex.

The old Princess received me in the drawing-room in her usual careless and dingy manner.

"How is it your people are taking wing so early, sir?" she asked, cramming snuff into both her nostrils. I looked at her, and a load fell from my shoulders. The term promissory note, which Philip had let drop, had been torturing me. She suspected nothing, or so at least it seemed to me at the time. Zinaida appeared from the other room, in a black dress, pale, her hair out of curl; she took my hand in hers silently and led me away.

"I heard your voice," she said, "and came out immediately. And was it so easy for you to desert us, cruel boy?"

"I have come to bid you farewell, Princess," I said in answer, "and probably forever. You have heard that we are moving back to town?"

Zinaida looked searchingly at me.

"Yes, I have. Thank you for coming. I began to think I should never see you again. Think kindly of me, if you can. I tormented you sometimes, I know, but I am not what you think me."

She turned away, leaning against the window-frame.

"Really I'm not. I know you have a bad opinion of me."

"I have?"

"Yes, you ... you."

"I?" I repeated sorrowfully, and my heart was shaken

as before under the spell of her irresistible, indescribable charm. "I? Believe me, Zinaida Alexandrovna, whatever you have done, however you have tortured me, I shall love and adore you to the end of my days."

She turned swiftly, her arms spread wide, and then flung them round my neck, kissing me passionately and firmly. God knows whom that long, farewell kiss was intended for, but I drank up its sweetness eagerly, I knew it would never be repeated. "Good-bye, good-bye," I said again and again.

She tore herself from me and went out of the room. I, too, went away. I am incapable of describing the feelings with which I went away. I should not like to have to go through all this again, and yet I should count myself an unhappy man if I had missed it.

We moved back to town. It was long before I was able to shake off the past and begin working again. My wound healed slowly; but I bore no grudge against my father. On the contrary, he had grown in my eyes; let psychologists explain the paradox as they may. I was walking along a boulevard one day when to my great joy whom should I run into but Lushin! I liked him for his frank, sincere ways, and he was dear to me for the memories he aroused in me. I rushed up to him.

"Ha!" he said, knitting his brows. "It's you, young man, is it? Let's have a look at you! Still a bit sallow, but the moping expression has gone from your eyes. You look like a human being, not a lap-dog. That's good. Well, how are you? Working?"

I heaved a sigh. I did not want to lie, and was ashamed of owning the truth.

"Never mind," continued Lushin, "don't lose heart! The chief thing is to lead a normal life and not let yourself be carried away by your feelings. For what's the good of that? Wherever the wave carries you, it is bad; but as long as a man has so much as a stone beneath him—

at least he stands on his two feet. I do nothing but cough—and Belovzorov—have you heard about him?”

“Why, what about him?”

“Completely disappeared; they say he went to the Caucasus. Let it be a lesson to you, young man! And all because people don’t know when it’s time to part, to tear the net. You seem to have come out of it unscathed. Mind you don’t get caught another time! Good-bye!”

“I’ll never be caught again,” thought I, “I’ll never see her again.” But I was destined to see Zinaida once more.

XXI

My father was in the habit of taking a ride every day; he had a fine English russet stallion with a long thin neck and long legs; it was a savage, indomitable animal; its name was Electric. Nobody but my father could manage it. One day he came into my room in a good-natured mood, a rare thing with him of late; he was going out riding and had his spurs on. I begged him to take me with him.

“We’d better play leap-frog, instead,” my father answered, “you won’t be able to keep up with me on your little German nag.”

“Oh yes, I will; I’ll put on spurs.”

“Come on, then!”

We set out. I had a shaggy black pony, sure-footed and spirited; true, it had to go at a gallop to keep up with Electric’s trot, but I did not fall behind. I have never seen a horseman like my father; his seat was so carelessly easy, so elegant, and the horse seemed to feel it and to be proud of its rider. We rode through the boulevards, spent some time on the Devichye Polye, jumped several fences (at first I had been afraid of jumping, but my father despised timid people—and so I had stopped being

afraid), crossed the Moscow River twice, and I was beginning to think we were going back, especially as my father remarked that my horse seemed tired, when he suddenly turned sharply from me and made for the Krymsky ford, sending his horse at a gallop along the bank. I galloped after him. When we reached a towering pile of old logs, he jumped lightly off Electric, bade me dismount, threw the reins of his horse into my hands, and told me to wait there, by the logs; then he turned into a narrow side-street and disappeared from my sight. I began pacing backwards and forwards along the bank, leading the horses and scolding Electric, who kept tossing his head, shaking all over, snorting and neighing; whenever I stood still, he pawed the ground, squealed and bit my nag on the neck, in a word, behaved like the spoilt thoroughbred he was. Still my father did not come back. An unpleasant dampness rose from the river; a drizzling rain fell soundlessly, mottling with tiny dark patches those tiresome grey logs, around which I kept wandering till heartily sick of them. I felt bored and dejected, and still my father did not come. A policeman, evidently a Finn, as grey as the logs, with an enormous pot-like shako on his head, and carrying a halberd (and what on earth was a policeman doing on the bank of the Moscow River?), approached me, and turning a face like that of a wrinkled beldame towards me, asked:

"What are you doing here with those horses, Master? Let me hold them for you."

I did not answer him; he begged for some tobacco. To get rid of him (and also because my impatience was becoming intolerable), I took a few paces in the direction in which my father had gone; then I went down the side-street, turned the corner—and stopped short. About forty paces away, at the open window of a small wooden house, stood my father, his back to me; he was leaning against the window-sill, and inside, half concealed by the curtain,

sat a woman in a dark dress, talking to my father; the woman was Zinaida.

I was dumbfounded. I had certainly not expected this. My first impulse was to turn tail. "If my father looks back, I am lost," I thought. But a strange feeling, which was stronger than curiosity, stronger even than jealousy, stronger than fear, kept me rooted to the spot. I stood gazing and straining my ears to catch their words. My father seemed to be insisting on something to which Zinaida would not consent. I can still see her face—sorrowful, grave, beautiful, stamped with an indescribable blend of devotion, sadness, and love, and with a kind of despair—I can find no other word for it. She spoke in monosyllables, never raising her eyes, merely smiling humbly and stubbornly. The smile alone would have told me it was Zinaida. My father shrugged his shoulders and straightened his hat—a sure sign of impatience with him. . . . Then I made out the words: "*Vous devez vous séparer de cette. . .*" Zinaida drew herself up and stretched out her arm. . . . An extraordinary scene was enacted before my eyes: my father lifted his riding-crop, with which he had been flicking the dust from the skirts of his coat, and brought it down with a smart crack on that bared forearm. It was all I could do not to cry out, but Zinaida only started, looked at my father in silence, lifted her arm slowly up to her lips, kissing the weal crimsoning on it. Flinging away the riding-crop, my father rushed up the steps of the porch and burst into the house. . . . Zinaida turned away from the window, her arms outstretched and her head thrown back. . . .

I retreated, faint with fear, my heart filled with an anguish of amazement; I ran to the end of the side-street, almost letting Electric break loose from the halter, and returned to the river-bank. My thoughts were in utter confusion. I had known before that my father, usually so cool and reserved, was given to sudden fits of fury, and

yet I found it impossible to realize what it was I had just witnessed. . . . But I knew I should never be able to forget, as long as I lived, Zinaida's gesture, look, smile; I knew that her image, so suddenly revealed to me in this new aspect, would be engraved forever on my memory. I gazed vacantly at the river, unconscious of the tears trickling down my cheeks. "He beat her," I kept repeating, "beat her, beat her. . . ."

"Come on, give me the reins, won't you?" It was my father's voice behind me.

I handed him the reins mechanically. He leaped on to Electric's back. . . . The horse, chilled from the long wait, reared, and then sprang forward ten feet or so. But my father soon got the better of it, plunging his spurs into the animal's sides and striking it on the neck with his fist. . . . "Ah—I haven't got my whip!" he muttered.

I thought of the crack with which the riding-crop had come down, and shuddered.

"What have you done with it?" I asked my father after a short pause.

He galloped ahead without answering. I overtook him. I felt I simply must see his face.

"Did you get tired waiting?" my father asked through his teeth.

"Rather. But where did you drop your whip?" I insisted.

My father darted a swift glance at me.

"I didn't drop it," he said, "I threw it away."

He turned thoughtful and bent his head . . . and it was then, for the first and probably last time, that I saw what kindness and compassion his severe features were capable of expressing.

Again he set his horse at a gallop, and this time I was not able to overtake him. I arrived home a quarter of an hour after he did.

"That's what love is!" I told myself once more that night, seated at my desk, on which books and note-books

were gradually accumulating. "That's passion! You would think *anyone* would be roused to anger, *no one* would submit to a blow, however dear the hand which dealt it! But apparently even this can be endured by one who loves.... And I... and I thought...."

This last month had matured me considerably, and my own love, with its agitation and sufferings, now seemed to me petty, childish, insignificant, in comparison with that other unknown thing as to which I could only form vague surmises, that thing which was as terrifying to me as an unfamiliar countenance, beautiful but stern, which one seeks in vain to make out through the gloom....

I had a strange and terrible dream that night. I dreamed I went into a dark, low-ceilinged room.... My father stood there, whip in hand, stamping his foot; Zinaida crouched in the corner, and there was a red gash, not on her arm, but across her brow. Behind them both rose the figure of Belovzorov, covered with blood. He opened his pale lips and uttered angry threats at my father....

Two months later I entered the University, and six months after that my father died (of a stroke) in Petersburg, where we had just moved. A few days before his death he received a letter from Moscow which caused him great agitation. He went to my mother and asked her for something, they say he actually wept—my father wept! On the morning of the day when he had his stroke, he began a letter to me in French: "My son," he wrote, "beware of the love of woman, beware of that joy, that poison...." After his death, my mother sent a considerable sum of money to Moscow.

XXII

Three or four years passed. I had just graduated from the University but had not yet made up my mind what to take up, what door to knock at; in the meantime I

merely idled. One evening I met Maidanov at the theatre. He was married and was employed in a government office, but I did not find any changes in him. He still indulged in futile enthusiasm and sudden fits of depression.

"Do you know," he said casually, "that Madame Dolskaya is here?"

"Who is Madame Dolskaya?"

"Have you forgotten? She's the former Princess Zasekina, with whom we were all, including yourself, in love. In the country, near Neskuchny Gardens—remember?"

"Is she married to Dolsky?"

"Yes."

"And is she here, at the theatre?"

"No, but she arrived in Petersburg a few days ago; she's going abroad."

"And what sort of man is her husband?"

"Oh, he's an excellent fellow, rich, too. We used to work together, in Moscow. You understand, after that affair—but you know all about that, of course" (Maidanov gave a significant smile)—"it was not so easy for her to find a husband; there were consequences. . . . But a woman of her ability can manage anything. Go and call on her, she'll be very glad to see you. She's lovelier than ever."

Maidanov gave me Zinaida's address. She was staying at the Demuth Hotel. Old memories stirred within me. . . . I promised myself I would visit my old flame the very next day. But all sorts of things turned up; I let a week go by, and another, and when at last I set out for the Demuth Hotel and asked for Madame Dolskaya, I was told she died four days ago, rather unexpectedly, in childbirth.

I felt as if someone had struck me right over the heart. The thought that I might have seen her, and had not, and would never see her again, this bitter thought ate into my soul with all the power of bootless reproach. "Dead!"

I echoed, staring blankly at the porter, and then went quietly out into the street and walked off, without any idea where I was going. The entire past surged up before me. So this is how that young, brilliant, eager life was fated to end, this is the destiny to which it had aspired with such haste and perturbation! Thus musing, I recalled those dear features, those eyes, those tresses, all shut up in a narrow wooden box, reposing in the damp dark earth somewhere not far from me—who was still living—perhaps only a few yards away from my father. . . . Turning over all these things in my mind, I tried to concentrate on them, but the words:

*Indifferent lips pronounced the fatal tidings
To my indifferent ears. . .*

echoed in my soul. Oh, youth, youth! You care for nothing, you seem to possess all the treasures of the universe, grief itself is a source of entertainment for you, even sorrow is becoming to you! Confident and arrogant, you declare: behold, I alone live, while your days flee, vanishing unreckoned and leaving not a trace behind them, and everything within you vanishes, like wax melting in sunlight, like snow. . . . And it may be that the whole secret of your charm lies, not in your ability to achieve whatsoever you will, but in your ability to believe there is nothing you could not achieve, in the fact that you expend so recklessly forces for which you can find no other uses, that each one of us is firmly convinced of his right to say: what would not I have done, if I had not wasted my time so vainly!

Take myself for example: on what were my expectations based, what did I hope for, what brilliant future did I anticipate, that I scarcely gave a sigh, scarcely felt a moment's grief, as I bade farewell to the spectre of my first love?

And what, of all I hoped for, has come true? And now, as the evening shadows begin to fall across my path, is there anything more radiant, more precious to me than the memories of that short-lived early morning storm in spring?

But why do I seek to calumniate myself? Even then, in those reckless youthful days, I was not deaf to the sorrowful voice calling to me, to the solemn sound reaching me from the grave. I remember a few days after that on which I heard of Zinaida's death, I attended, of my own accord, obeying an irresistible impulse, the death-bed of a poor old woman who lived in the same building as I did. She lay there in her agony, struggling for her life, beneath a covering of rags, her mattress a couple of hard planks, her pillow a sack. Her life had been one grinding struggle with incessant poverty. She had never known any joys, never tasted the sweets of happiness—she might have been expected to welcome death, to see in it her peace and freedom. And yet, while her decrepit body held out, while her bosom still rose and fell painfully beneath the icy hand that had her in its grip, while there was still a vestige of strength left in her, the old woman crossed herself continually, whispering: "O Lord, forgive my sins. . ." and the horror, the fear of death which could be seen in her eyes only disappeared as the last spark of consciousness left her. . . . I remember that there, at the death-bed of this poor old woman, I thought with anguish of Zinaida, and a desire rose in me to pray for her, for my father, for myself.

SPRING TORRENTS



Days so happy,
Years so gay,
Like spring torrents
Have passed away.

Old Song

IT WAS after one o'clock in the morning when he got back to his study. He sent away the servant who came to light the candles and dropped heavily into an arm-chair by the hearth, covering his face with both hands. Never before had he felt such weariness, both physical and spiritual. He had spent the whole evening in the company of agreeable women and cultured men. Many of the women had been good-looking, almost all the men had been distinguished by brains or talent, and he had held his own in the conversation, even displaying brilliance . . . and yet he had never before felt so strongly that *taedium vitae*, of which the ancient Romans, too, complained, and that loathing for life had never before overcome him with such suffocating power. If he had been a little younger he would have wept for misery, boredom and vexation; a bitterness, pungent and burning as wormwood, filled his heart. Something loathsome and oppressive seemed to be closing in on him from all directions, like a dark, autumnal light, and he did not know how to escape from this darkness and bitterness. There was no use hoping for sleep, he was sure it would not come.

He plunged into reflections—slow, languid, embittered.

He reflected on the vanity, the superfluity, the trivial falseness of all things human. He passed all the ages of man, one after another, in review (he was a little over fifty-two himself), and found no indulgence for a single

one of them. Always the same everlasting meaningless activities, the same futile expenditure of energy, the same partly genuine, partly affected self-deception—anything for the sake of distraction!—and all of a sudden, like a bolt from the blue, old age was upon one, and the ever-growing, corrosive fear of death underlying everything, and then . . . the abyss. Well enough if things got no worse, but no doubt weakness and suffering would come before the end, like rust on steel. . . . The ocean of life did not display itself to him in the violent waves described by the poets—he pictured it as a calm, placid sea, motionless and transparent down to the murky bottom, himself seated in a frail barque, while amidst the dark silt on the bottom, hideous monsters, like great fish, could just be discerned. These were the griefs inseparable from life—sickness, misfortunes, madness, poverty, blindness. . . . He peered more intently, and lo, one of the monsters emerged from the surrounding gloom, rising ever higher, becoming more and more visible, more and more loathsomely distinct. . . . Another minute and it will overturn the boat. But suddenly it gets dim again, moving away, sinking to the bottom, where it lies stirring its fins almost imperceptibly. . . . But the appointed hour will come, and it will overturn the boat.

He tossed back his head, leaped to his feet, paced the length of the room once or twice, and then walked over to his desk, opening one drawer after another and rummaging among his papers, among old letters, most of which were from women. He could hardly have formulated to himself what he was seeking, all he desired was to find distraction in activity from the thoughts oppressing him. Turning over several letters at random (there was a withered flower, tied with a faded ribbon, in one), he merely shrugged his shoulders and, glancing towards the fire-place, laid them aside, probably intending to burn all this superfluous rubbish. Thrusting his hands hurriedly

into one drawer after another, he suddenly opened his eyes wide, as he slowly brought to light a small, old-fashioned octagonal box and slowly lifted its lid. In the box, beneath two layers of yellowed cotton wool, lay a small garnet cross.

He gazed in astonishment for several minutes at this cross—and suddenly uttered a faint exclamation. A look half regretful, half joyous, passed over his features. Such an expression may be noted on the face of a man who unexpectedly meets one he has long lost sight of, one whom he loved tenderly long ago, and who appears unexpectedly before him, looking just as in old days, and yet changed by the years.

He rose and went over to the hearth, seating himself in the arm-chair again and again covering his face with his hands.... "Why today? Why today of all days?" he asked himself, and recalled events that had taken place long, long ago.

This is what he remembered....

But first his name and patronymic must be given—Dmitri Pavlovich. His surname was Sanin.

This is what he remembered: .

I

It was the summer of 1840. Sanin had just passed his twenty-second birthday, and was in Frankfort on the Main, on his way back from Italy to Russia. He possessed a very moderate fortune, and was an independent individual, with hardly any near relatives. On the death of a distant relative he came into a few thousand rubles, and decided to spend them abroad before entering the government service, before finally shouldering the yoke of officialdom, without which he could not count on sufficient means for subsistence. Sanin fulfilled his intentions

to the letter, managing his affairs so skilfully that on the day of his arrival in Frankfort he had just enough money at his disposal to get him to Petersburg. In 1840 there were hardly any railways in Europe, and tourists travelled by diligence. Sanin ordered a seat in the *Beiwagen*, but the diligence would not start till after 10 in the evening, and he had a long wait before him. Fortunately the weather was good, and after dining in the then celebrated "White Swan," Sanin set off to have a look at the town. He went to see Dannecker's *Ariadne*, which did not make much impression on him, visited the house of Goethe, of whose works, by the way, he had read nothing but *The Sorrows of Werther*, and that in a French translation. He strolled along the banks of the Main, feeling bored, as becomes a decent traveller; at last, towards six in the evening, he found himself, with weary limbs and dusty boots, in one of the most obscure streets in Frankfort. This street was to remain long imprinted on his memory. On the front of one of its few houses he caught sight of a sign informing the passer-by that this was the shop of Giovanni Roselli, Italian confectioner. Sanin went in for a glass of lemonade, but in the front room, where, behind a modest counter, on painted shelves reminiscent of those in chemists' shops, stood a few bottles with gilt labels, and an equal number of glass jars containing rusks, chocolates and fruit-drops, there was not a soul to be seen; nothing but a grey cat, blinking and purring, drawing its claws in and out of the seat of a high wicker stool at the window, while a great ball of crimson wool, ruby red in the slanting rays of the evening sun, lay on the floor beside an overturned work-box of carved wood. Vague sounds came from the next room. Sanin stood waiting for the bell over the door to stop tinkling, before raising his voice to say: "Is anyone there?" Just then the door into the next room opened, and what Sanin saw almost took his breath away.

II

A girl of nineteen or so, with dark curls hanging over her bare shoulders, burst into the front room, her bare arms extended; on catching sight of Sanin, she rushed up to him, seized his hand and drew him after her, exclaiming in a breathless voice: "Quick, quick, save him!" From no reluctance to obey, but from sheer amazement, Sanin did not follow the girl at once, but stood as if rooted to the spot. Never in his life had he seen such a beauty. She turned towards him, exclaiming: "Come, do come!" and there was such despair in her voice, her look, the movement of her hand, clenched convulsively against her pale cheek, that he dashed after her through the open door, without another moment's hesitation.

In the room into which he followed the girl there lay, on an old-fashioned horse-hair sofa, a boy of about fourteen, strikingly like her, probably her brother. His face was deathly pale—white with a yellowish tinge, like wax or ancient marble. His eyes were closed, his thick black hair cast a shadow over a brow like chiselled stone and motionless, finely drawn eyebrows. Clenched teeth could be discerned between his bluish lips. He seemed not to be breathing. One hand hung down to the floor, the other was flung over his head. The boy was dressed, his jacket buttoned closely. His throat was constricted by a tightly-knotted tie.

The girl flew to him with a loud wail. "He's dead, he's dead!" she exclaimed. . . . "He was sitting there talking to me only a minute ago, and suddenly he fell down and lay there without moving. . . . Dear God—is there nothing we can do for him! And Mamma is out. Pantaleone, Pantaleone, where's the doctor?" she added in Italian. "Did you go for a doctor?"

"I didn't go myself, Signorina, I sent Luise," came in a husky voice from the doorway, and a little old man in a

purple frock-coat with black buttons and a high white cravat, short nankeen breeches, and blue woollen stockings, hobbled bow-legged into the room. His tiny countenance was practically invisible beneath a bush of iron-grey hair. Sticking up all round and falling back in matted locks, this hair gave the old man's figure the aspect of a crested fowl, a likeness still more striking owing to the fact that nothing but a pointed nose and a pair of round yellow eyes emerged from the dark grey mass.

"Luise will get there sooner, I can't run," continued the old man in Italian, shifting his flat gouty feet in laced boots tied at the top with a bow. "I've brought some water."

He was clasping the long neck of a bottle of water tightly in his gnarled, withered fingers.

"But Emile will be dead before he gets here!" exclaimed the girl, stretching out her hands towards Sanin. "Kind sir, o *mein Herr!* Can't you do anything for him?"

"He must be bled, it's a stroke," remarked the old man she had called Pantaleone.

Although Sanin had not the slightest knowledge of medicine, one thing he knew for certain—boys of fourteen are not subject to strokes.

"It's a swoon, not a stroke," he said, addressing Pantaleone. "Have you any brushes?"

The old man raised his face: "What?"

"Brushes, brushes," repeated Sanin, first in German, then in French. "Brushes," he said again, brushing his own coat in dumb show.

At last the old man understood what he meant.

"Ah, brushes! *Spazzette!* Of course we have!"

"Bring them here. We'll take off his coat and rub him."

"Good. . . , *Benone!* Shouldn't we pour water on his head?"

"No, afterwards! Go and get those brushes as quick as you can."

Pantaleone placed the bottle on the floor and ran out of the room, returning the next instant with two brushes, a hairbrush and a clothes-brush. A curly poodle followed him in, wagging its tail vigorously and gazing inquisitively at the old man, the girl, and even Sanin, as if desirous of knowing what all the fuss was about.

Sanin rapidly removed the coat from the recumbent boy, loosened his collar, and rolled up his shirt-sleeves, then, arming himself with a brush, rubbed his chest and arms with all his might. Pantaleone used the other brush—the hairbrush—with equal zeal on the boy's boots and trousers. The girl flung herself on to her knees beside the sofa and, clutching at her head with her hands, gazed into her brother's face with an unblinking stare.

While Sanin worked away with the brush, he cast oblique glances at her. Great God—what a lovely creature!

III

Her nose was rather long, of the handsome aquiline type, her upper lip was faintly shaded with down; but her complexion, smooth and opaque, could have borne comparison with ivory or pale amber. The glossy waves of her hair were like those of Allori's *Judith* in the Palazzo Pitti, and her eyes in particular, dark-grey, with a black rim round the iris, were wondrous, triumphant eyes—even now, when their gleam was dimmed by fear and grief. . . . Sanin's thoughts flew involuntarily to the glorious country he had just quitted. . . . But not even in Italy had he come across anything to equal this. The girl was breathing at infrequent, irregular intervals, as if waiting at every breath for her brother to begin breathing.

Sanin went on rubbing, but had eyes for something else

besides the girl. The quaint figure of Pantaleone also attracted his attention. The old man, worn out with his exertions, panted, jumping with every stroke of the brush and groaning piteously, and his great shock of hair, damp with sweat, tossed heavily from side to side, like the roots of some great plant, washed bare by water.

"Take off his boots, at least," Sanin was just going to say. The poodle, no doubt excited by so many unusual occurrences, crouched on its front paws, barking.

"*Tartaglia—canaglia!*" the old man hissed.

But just then the face of the girl was transformed. Her brows shot up, her eyes seemed to grow still larger, and her face shone with joy. . . .

Sanin looked round. . . . The colour was returning to the cheeks of the youth, his eyelids twitched, his nostrils quivered. Drawing a breath of air through his still clenched teeth, he sighed. . . .

"Emile!" cried the girl. "*Emilio mio!*"

The great black eyes opened slowly. Their glance was still vacant, but now a faint smile crept into them. The same faint smile descended to his pale lips. Then he moved his hanging hand and placed it with a sweeping gesture on his breast.

"Emilio," repeated the girl and rose to her feet. The expression of her face was so vivid, so intense, that it seemed as if she was either just going to burst out crying or break into laughter.

"Emile! What is it? Emile!" came from the other side of the door, and a trimly attired lady with silvery hair and a dark complexion entered the room with rapid steps. She was closely followed by an elderly man, from behind whom appeared and disappeared the head of a maidservant.

The girl ran to meet them.

"He is saved, Mamma, he is alive!" she cried, embracing the lady convulsively.

"But what has happened?" said the lady again. "I come home and suddenly I meet the *Herr Doktor* and Luise."

The girl began telling her mother what had happened, and the doctor approached the patient, who was gradually coming to his senses, smiling all the time. He seemed to be ashamed of the alarm he had caused.

"You've been rubbing him with brushes, I see," the doctor said to Sanin and Pantaleone. "And you did very well. An excellent idea. . . . And now let us see what other remedies we must apply. . . ."

He felt the patient's pulse. "H'm. Show me your tongue."

The lady bent over the boy anxiously. He smiled still more broadly, turned his eyes on her, and blushed.

It occurred to Sanin that he might be in the way, and he went back to the shop. But he had hardly had time to touch the handle of the street-door when the girl again appeared before him and stopped him.

"You are going?" she said, looking into his face kindly. "I don't want to keep you, but you must promise to come back this evening. We are so deeply obliged to you, but for you my brother might have died. We should like to thank you—Mamma wants to. You must tell us who you are, you must rejoice with us. . . ."

"But I'm going to Berlin tonight," stammered Sanin.

"You'll have plenty of time," the girl countered energetically. "Come and have a cup of chocolate with us in an hour. Promise, now! I must go back to him. You will come, won't you?"

What was there left for Sanin to do?

"I will come," he said.

The lovely creature gave his hand a quick pressure and fluttered away—the next minute he found himself in the street.

IV

When Sanin returned to the confectioner's shop an hour and a half later, he was received like one of the family. Emile was still sitting on the sofa where he had been massaged; the doctor had prescribed some medicine for him and recommended "great caution with regard to emotional sensations," since the patient was a nervous subject with a tendency to heart disease. He had often had fainting fits before but had never had such a prolonged and violent attack. The doctor, however, declared him to be quite out of danger now. Emile, as befitted a convalescent, wore a loose dressing-gown; his mother had wound a blue woollen scarf round his neck; but he looked cheerful, indeed, festive; and the whole atmosphere was festive. Beside the sofa, on a round table covered with a clean table-cloth, an enormous china coffee-pot filled with fragrant chocolate dominated cups, carafes of syrup, biscuits and rolls, and even flowers. Six slender wax candles burned in a pair of ancient silver candlesticks. On one side of the sofa a high-backed arm-chair opened its warm embraces, and in this arm-chair Sanin was made to sit. All the inhabitants of the confectioner's, whose acquaintance he had made that day, were present, including Tartaglia the poodle and the cat. All seemed inexpressibly happy, the poodle fairly sneezed with joy; only the cat was unmoved, blinking and simpering as before. Sanin was made to tell them who he was, where he came from, and what his name was. When he said he was a Russian, the ladies expressed mild astonishment and even gasped, while hastening to assure him, speaking both at once, that his German was marvellous, but that if he preferred speaking French, he might do so, since they understood and spoke that language perfectly well. Sanin did not fail to take advantage of the offer. "Sanin? Sanin!" The ladies had never supposed a Russian name could be so easy to pronounce. His Christian

name—Dimitri—that was very nice, too. The older lady remarked that she had heard a beautiful opera called *Demetrio e Polibio* in her youth, but she liked “Dimitri” ever so much more than “Demetrio.” Sanin chatted for about an hour in this way. And the ladies, for their part, revealed to him all the details of their private lives. The mother, the lady with the silvery hair, monopolized most of the conversation. Sanin learned that her name was Leonora Roselli, that she had remained a widow since the death of her husband, Giovanni Battista Roselli, who had settled in Frankfort-on the Main twenty-five years ago as a confectioner. That Giovanni Battista hailed from Vicenza, and had been a good, if somewhat hot-tempered and bellicose man, and a Republican to boot. With these words Madame Roselli pointed to his portrait in oils, which hung over the sofa. The painter—“also a Republican,” as Madame Roselli remarked with a sigh—can hardly have caught a very good likeness, for the late Giovanni Battista looked like some grim-visaged brigand in his portrait, a kind of Rinaldo Rinaldini. Madame Roselli herself was a native of the “ancient and beautiful town of Parma, where there is such a glorious church-dome, adorned with frescoes by the immortal Correggio.” From prolonged sojourn in Germany, however, she had become thoroughly Teutonized. She added, shaking her head sadly, that she had nobody left but that daughter and that son (she pointed to each of them in turn); the daughter’s name was Gemma, and the son’s Emile; they were good, obedient children, both of them, especially Emile (“And aren’t I obedient?” put in the daughter.—“Oh, you’re a Republican, too,” her mother retorted.); that of course business was not as good as it had been in the lifetime of her husband, who had been a real artist at confectionery. . . (“*Un grand’uomo!*” insisted Pantaleone, looking very severe.) but that she could not complain, thank God!

Gemma listened to her mother, smiling, sighing, stroking her shoulder, shaking a reproving finger at her, and every now and then glancing at Sanin. After a time she got up, put her arms round her mother and kissed her on the neck, just beneath the chin, making her laugh and squeal. Pantaleone, too, was introduced to Sanin. It appeared that he had once sung baritone in opera, but had long given up the stage and become a member of the Roselli family—something between a friend of the family and a servant. Despite his prolonged residence in Germany, he spoke German badly and could only swear in that language, even then managing to murder the few oaths he knew. "*Ferroflucto spiccebubbio*"* was the term he applied to almost every German. Italian he spoke perfectly, being a native of Sinigaglia, where the *lingua toscana in bocca romana* may still be heard.

Emilio was in a state of languid bliss, obviously yielding to the pleasant sensations of one who has only just escaped some danger, or is recovering; it was obvious that he was the pet of the family. He thanked Sanin shyly, but most of the time he applied himself to the syrups and sweets. Sanin was obliged to drink two big cups of excellent chocolate and devour remarkable quantities of biscuits. Hardly had he finished one, when Gemma brought him another, and it was impossible to refuse. He soon began to feel quite at home, and the time flew with incredible rapidity. He had to tell them so much—about Russia itself, the Russian climate, Russian society, the Russian peasant—and especially about the Cossacks; then there was the war of 1812, Peter the Great, the Kremlin, Russian songs, church-bells. The two ladies had none but the faintest conception of our bound-

* Damned rogue. (Distortion of the German *verfluchte Spitzbube*.)—Ed.

less, remote native land. Madame Roselli, or, as she was usually called, Frau Lenore, amazed Sanin by asking if the famous Ice House, erected in the previous century in Petersburg, still existed. She had read such an interesting article about it only recently in one of her late husband's books—*Bellezze delle arti*. And in reply to Sanin's exclamation: "D'you mean to say you think there is never any summer in Russia?" Frau Lenore admitted that up till now she had thought of Russia as a land of eternal snow, where everyone went about in fur coats and all the men were military—but extremely hospitable, and the peasants so docile. Sanin endeavoured to give her and her daughter somewhat more precise information. When Russian music was mentioned, he was immediately begged to sing a Russian song, and his attention was drawn to the tiny upright piano standing in the room, with white keys instead of black, and black instead of white. He complied without waiting to be pressed and, accompanying himself with two fingers of his right hand and three (the thumb, the middle finger and the little finger) of his left hand, sang in a high nasal tenor, first "The Red Sarafan," and then "Along the Pavement." The ladies praised his voice and the music, but most of all admired the softness and melodiousness of the Russian language, and demanded a translation of the words. Sanin fulfilled their wish, but since the words of "The Red Sarafan," and still less those of "Along the Pavement" (*sur une rue pavée une jeune fille allait à l'eau*, as he translated the sense of the original), would scarcely be likely to inspire in his hearers a high idea of Russian poetry, he first recited, then translated, and finally sang (coming to grief a little in the minor passages) Pushkin's "Unforgettable Moment of Bliss," set to music by Glinka. This time the ladies were enthusiastic—Frau Lenore actually discovered an extraordinary resemblance between the Russian and Italian

languages. The very names—Pushkin (which she pronounced Pussekin) and Glinka—sounded familiar in her ears. It was then Sanin's turn to request the ladies to sing, and they, too, consented without any fuss. Frau Lenore sat down to the piano, and she and Gemma sang several *duettini* and *stornelli* together. The mother must once have had a good contralto, and the daughter's voice, though not very strong, was pleasing.

VI

But it was not so much Gemma's voice, as Gemma herself, that Sanin admired. He sat a little behind and to one side of them, and told himself that no palm-tree—not even in the verses of the then fashionable Russian poet Benediktov—could compare with the graceful slenderness of her figure. When she raised her eyes to the ceiling in the sentimental parts, he thought heaven itself could not have resisted such a glance. Even old Pantaleone, leaning against the door-post, his chin and mouth almost hidden by his wide cravat, and listening gravely with the air of a connoisseur—even he was moved as he looked at the girl's lovely face—and he must surely have been used to the sight. When she came to the end of the *duettino*, Frau Lenore remarked that Emile had an excellent voice, the true silver, but that he had now reached the age when the voice changes (indeed he spoke in a constantly breaking bass), and was therefore forbidden to sing. But what if Pantaleone, in honour of the guest, were to revive the past? Pantaleone immediately assumed an air of dissatisfaction, frowned, passing his hand through his hair, and declared that he had long ago given up all that, though in his youth he had been able to make a good showing, and, moreover, belonged to the great era when real, classical singing still existed, not

to be compared with the squeakings of this generation, the era when there had been a real school of singing. He, Pantaleone Cippatola of Varese, had once been handed a laurel wreath in Modena, while at the same time white doves had been released in the theatre. There was a Prince Tarbusky, a Russian, by the way (*il principe Tarbuski*), with whom he had been on the most friendly terms, who had constantly invited him, at the supper table, to go to Russia, promising him mountains of gold, mountains! But he had not been able to bear the thought of leaving Italy, the land of Dante—*il paese del Dante*! Afterwards, of course, there had been unfortunate occurrences, he had not been sufficiently cautious. . . . Here the old man broke off, lowering his eyelids, sighed profoundly once or twice, and again began talking about the classical age of singing and the famous tenor Garcia, for whom he cherished a boundless respect.

"There was a man!" he cried. "Never had the great Garcia—*il gran Garcia*—demeaned himself by singing falsetto like the petty tenors—*tenoracci*—of today. His were all chest-notes, *voce di petto, sì!*" The old man smote his shirt-frill with his small, withered fist. "And what an actor! A volcano, *signori miei*, a volcano, *un Vesuvio!* I had the happiness and honour to sing with him in *Othello*, the opera *dell'illustrissimo maestro Rossini*. Garcia sang *Othello*, I was Iago—and when he came to the words. . . ." Here Pantaleone struck a pose and sang in a husky, trembling, but still touching voice:

*L'i . . . ra daver . . . so daver . . . so il fato
Io più no . . . no . . . no non temerò!*

"The whole house shook, *signori miei!* But I held my own, I sang after him:

*L'i . . . ra daver . . . so daver . . . so il fato
Temèr più non dovrò!*

“And suddenly he burst out—like lightning, like a tiger: ‘*Morrol . . . ma vendicàto!*’”

“Or when—in the famous aria from *Matrimonio segreto*—*Pria che spunti*—he came to the words *l’cavalli di galoppo*, you should have heard him, *il gran Garcia*, sing *Senza posa caccierà*—how stupendous!—*com’è stupendo! Hè. . .*” The old man embarked upon some extraordinary *floritura*, but stopped after nine or ten notes, cleared his throat, and turned aside with a wave of the hand, muttering: “Why do you torture me?” Gemma immediately sprang from her chair, clapping her hands, and ran with cries of “bravo! bravo!” to the hapless Iago in retirement, patting his shoulders affectionately with both her hands. Emile alone laughed pitilessly. But long ago La Fontaine wrote: *Cet âge est sans pitié*—this age knows no pity.

Sanin endeavoured to console the aged singer and began to talk to him in Italian (he had picked up a little during his last journey), speaking of the “*paese del Dante, dove il si suona*.” This phrase, together with *Lasciate ogni speranza*, made up the young tourist’s entire knowledge of Italian poetry. But Pantaleone was not mollified by his advances. Burying his chin still more deeply in his cravat and glaring morosely, he looked still more like a bird, and an angry bird at that—a raven or a kite. Then Emile, with the slight, transitory blush of a petted child, turned to his sister, saying that if she wished to amuse the visitor she could do no better than read one of Maltz’s comedies to him—she read them so well. Gemma laughed and slapped her brother’s hand, exclaiming that he was always so droll. Nevertheless she went immediately to her room, returned with a small book in her hand and sat down at the table, near the lamp, looked round, raised a finger, as if to say “Silence, please”—a purely Italian gesture—and began reading.

Maltz was a writer who lived in Frankfort in the 1830's, and wrote light, brief comedies in the local dialect, presenting local types with a humour which, if not profound, was gay and amusing. It appeared that Gemma really did read well—like a professional actress. She brought out the special features of each character, keeping it up throughout, employing all the power of mimicry that she had inherited with her Italian blood. When it came to representing some half-crazed beldame or stupid burgomaster, she spared neither her exquisite voice nor her lovely features, pulling the most laughable faces, screwing up her eyes, wrinkling her nose, lisping, squealing.... She herself never laughed while she was reading, but when her hearers (all, that is to say, but Pantaleone, who took himself off the moment the question of *quel ferroflucto Tedesco* was raised) interrupted her with an explosion of laughter, she let the book fall on to her knees, threw back her head and burst into ringing laughter, her black hair dancing in soft ringlets against her neck and her shaking shoulders. As soon as the laughter in the room subsided, she raised the book and, once more assuming the appropriate expression, gravely continued reading. Sanin was lost in admiration—what struck him most of all was the ease with which this face of almost classical beauty assumed a comical, sometimes almost commonplace expression. Gemma was not quite so successful in her rendering of the parts of young girls, the so-called *jeunes premières*. And she could not manage love scenes at all. She felt this herself and therefore read such scenes with a subtle shade of mockery as if she did not believe in all these solemn vows and high-flown speeches, which, moreover, the author himself abstained from as much as possible.

Sanin did not notice how the evening was passing, and only remembered he had a journey before him when the clock struck ten. He jumped up as if stung.

"What's the matter?" said Frau Lenore.

"Why, I have to go to Berlin tonight—I've ordered my seat in the diligence already."

"And when does the diligence leave?"

"At half past ten."

"Then you're late anyhow," remarked Gemma. "Stay... I'll go on reading."

"Did you pay all the money, or only leave a deposit?" inquired Frau Lenore.

"All of it," groaned Sanin with rueful emphasis.

Gemma regarded him from narrowed eyes and laughed, and her mother scolded her.

"The young gentleman has spent money for nothing and you laugh!"

"Never mind!" said Gemma. "It won't break him, and we'll try and console him. Have some lemonade."

Sanin drank a glass of lemonade, and Gemma started on Maltz again, and all went as merrily as before.

The clock struck twelve. Sanin rose to take his leave.

"You'll have to stay a few days more in Frankfort now," said Gemma, "you needn't be in such a hurry. It won't be nicer in any other town." She paused. "Really it won't," she added with a smile.

Sanin made no reply, telling himself that the emptiness of his purse would keep him in Frankfort, whether he liked it or not, till he received an answer from the friend in Berlin he would have to write to for a loan.

"Yes, do stay," said Frau Lenore. "We'll introduce you to Gemma's fiancé, Herr Karl Klüber. He couldn't come today because he was so busy in his shop... you probably noticed it on the Zeil—the biggest draper's and silk mercer's in the town. Well, he's at the head of it. But he'll be delighted to make your acquaintance."

This information—God knows why—somewhat saddened Sanin. "Happy man!" flashed through his mind. Glancing at Gemma, he thought he detected a mocking expression in her eyes. He began taking his leave.

"Till tomorrow? You'll come tomorrow, won't you?" asked Frau Lenore.

"Till tomorrow," said Gemma, in tones not questioning but affirmative, as if it could not be otherwise.

"Till tomorrow," replied Sanin.

Emile, Pantaleone, and Tartaglia the poodle saw him to the corner of the street. Pantaleone was unable to refrain from expressing his dissatisfaction over Gemma's reading.

"She ought to be ashamed! Grimacing, squealing—*una caricatural*! She ought to be acting Merope or Clytaemnestra—something great, tragic, and she amuses herself by aping some rotten German. I could do that myself—*Mehrz, kerz, schmerz*," he added in husky tones, protruding his chin and spreading out his fingers.

Tartaglia barked at him and Emile burst out laughing. The old man turned abruptly and went back.

Sanin returned to the "White Swan" (he had left his things there in the foyer), feeling somewhat dazed. His ears rang with all this German-French-Italian talk.

"Fiancée," he whispered as he lay in bed in his cheap hotel room. "And what a beauty! But what made me stay?"

The following day, however, he dispatched a letter to his Berlin friend.

VIII

He was not yet dressed when the waiter informed him that two gentlemen wished to see him. One of them turned out to be Emile, the other—a well-grown young man of imposing appearance and regular features—was Herr Karl Klüber, the fiancé of the beautiful Gemma.

There was probably no more civil, respectable, grave and courteous shopman than Herr Klüber in a single shop the length and breadth of Frankfort. The impeccability of his attire was perfectly in correspondence with the dignity of his bearing, and the elegance—true, a little conventional and reserved, in the English style (he had spent two years in England) —but nevertheless the enchanting elegance of his manners. At the very first glance it was obvious that this handsome, somewhat severe, extremely well-bred and well-washed young man was used to submitting to superiors and ordering subordinates about, and that behind the counter of his shop he was bound to inspire respect in the very customers. There could never be the slightest doubt of his supernatural honesty—you only had to look at his starched collar to be convinced of it. And his voice was just what was to be expected—mellow, with a confident resonance, but not too loud, and with a hint of tenderness in its tones. Such a voice was splendidly adapted for giving orders to shop assistants: “Kindly show that length of crimson Lyons velvet!” or “Fetch a chair for the lady!”

Herr Klüber opened the conversation by introducing himself, which he did with such a noble inclination of his body, moving his feet so ingratiatingly and touching heel to heel so courteously, that nobody could have helped feeling: “This man’s linen and spiritual qualities must be first-rate!” The condition of his exposed right hand (the left, sheathed in a suède glove, held a top-hat with a mirror-like surface, in the crown of which lay the other glove)—the condition of his right hand, which he extended to Sanin with modest assurance, exceeded all belief—every nail was a work of art in its way. He went on to state, in the most refined German, that he wished to declare his respect and gratitude to the foreign gentleman who had performed such a service to his future rel-

ative, the brother of his fiancée. With these words he waved his left hand, with the hat in it, in the direction of Emile, who turned towards the window as if embarrassed, his finger in his mouth. Herr Klüber added that he would count himself happy if he could be of any use to the foreign gentleman. Sanin replied, in his halting German, that he, too, was delighted, that his service had been trifling and asked his visitors to be seated. Herr Klüber thanked him and, spreading the tails of his coat with lightning celerity, sank on to a chair, but seated himself so lightly, and remained in the chair so insecurely that it was impossible not to understand this man is sitting here out of sheer politeness, he'll be fluttering off it in a moment. And indeed, he fluttered off immediately, performing a kind of modest, shuffling dance-step and declaring that he was unfortunately unable to stay any longer for he must hurry off to his shop—business first—but, the next day being a Sunday, he had arranged, with the consent of Frau Lenore and Fräulein Gemma, a little excursion to Soden, to which he had the honour to invite the foreign gentleman, and ventured to hope that he would not refuse to adorn it with his presence. Sanin did not refuse to adorn the excursion with his presence, and Herr Klüber withdrew, with reiterated expressions of respect, his pea-green trousers flashing pleasantly and the soles of his resplendently new boots creaking no less pleasantly.

IX

Emile, who had continued to stand at the window even after Sanin's invitation to sit down, turned on his heel the moment his future relative had gone; blushing, he asked Sanin with a childish pout if he might stay a little longer. "I'm ever so much better today," he added, "but the doctor says I mustn't work."

"By all means, stay! You won't be in my way in the least," exclaimed Sanin immediately, like a true Russian delighted to catch at any excuse to do nothing.

Emile thanked him, and in no time was quite at home with him and familiar with his room. He examined Sanin's things, asked about almost every object where he had bought it and what it was for. He helped him to shave, at the same time remarking that he ought to grow a moustache, and finished up by confiding in Sanin innumerable details regarding his mother, his sister, Pantaleone and even Tartaglia the poodle, and the way they all lived. Every sign of his former shyness had disappeared, he suddenly felt irresistibly drawn towards Sanin, and this by no means because he had saved his life the day before, but just because he was such a nice man. He lost no time in telling Sanin all his secrets. He laid special stress on the fact that Mamma was determined to make a shopkeeper of him, but that he was quite positive he was a born artist, a musician, a singer, that the theatre was his true vocation, that even Pantaleone encouraged him, but that Herr Klüber was on the side of Mamma, over whom he exercised a great influence, that the very idea of making a tradesman of him originated with Herr Klüber, who considered there could be no more glorious calling than that of a merchant! To sell cloth and velvet, to swindle his customers, to extort from them *Narren-oder Russen-Preise* (fools' or Russians' prices)—this was his ideal!*

"Well now, it's time to come home with me!" he exclaimed as soon as Sanin had finished dressing and written his letter to Berlin.

"It's too early yet," said Sanin.

* Formerly—and this is still the case, no doubt—at the arrival, in the month of May, of a host of Russians in Frankfort, prices went up in all the shops, and were known as *Russen* (Russians') or—alas!—*Narren* (fools') prices!—*Author's note.*

"It doesn't matter," said Emile, snuggling up to him. "Let's go! We'll go round by the post-office and from there to us. Gemma'll be ever so glad to see you! You can have breakfast with us. . . . You can talk to Mamma about me, about my future. . . ."

"Very well, then," said Sanin, and they set off together.

X

Gemma seemed really glad to see him, and Frau Lenore greeted him affectionately; he had evidently impressed them both favourably the day before. Emile ran off to order breakfast, after first whispering in Sanin's ear: "Mind you don't forget!"

"I won't," answered Sanin.

Frau Lenore was not quite well, she was suffering from migraine, and reclined in an arm-chair, trying not to move. Gemma had on a loose yellow smock, confined at the waist by a black leather belt. She, too, appeared tired and was a little pale, with dark circles beneath her eyes, which, however, took nothing from their brilliance, while her pallor added something mysterious and charming to the classical severity of her features. Today it was the graceful beauty of her hands which struck Sanin—when she lifted them to arrange her dark glossy curls, he could not take his eyes off her fingers, long and supple and finely articulated, like those of Raphael's *Fornarina*.

It was a very hot day; after breakfast Sanin rose to go, but was told that the best thing to do on such a day was to stay where one was—and he agreed; he stayed. In the back-room where he was sitting with his hostesses, it was nice and cool; the windows looked out on a small garden overgrown with acacia-bushes. Innumerable bees, wasps, and hornets buzzed in eager chorus among the thick foliage studded with golden blossom—their in-

cessant murmur came into the room through the half-closed shutters and drawn blinds; it spoke of the sultry heat saturating the air out of doors, and the coolness of the cosy, sheltered room seemed still more refreshing.

Sanin spoke a great deal, just as he had the day before, but not of Russia and Russian life. Wishing to please his young friend, who was sent to Herr Klüber straight after breakfast, to practise book-keeping, he turned the conversation to the comparative advantages and disadvantages of art and commerce. He was not surprised when Frau Lenore took the side of commerce, he had expected it; but Gemma, too, shared her opinion.

"If you are an artist—especially a singer," she affirmed, with an energetic downward movement of her hand, "you must be at the very top. Nothing else will do; and who knows if you will ever reach it?"

Pantaleone, who also took part in the discussion (the length of his service and his age entitled him to sit in the presence of his employers; and Italians are by no means sticklers for etiquette), Pantaleone, naturally, was all for art. Truth to tell, his arguments were somewhat weak; he began by pointing out that the most important thing was to have *d'un certo estro d'ispirazione*—a certain impulse springing from inspiration. Frau Lenore replied to this that he himself undoubtedly had this *estro* and yet. . . .

"I had enemies," said Pantaleone sulkily.

"And how dost thou know Emile won't have enemies, even if he turns out to possess this *estro*?" said Frau Lenore, lapsing into the familiar "thou" in the easy Italian way.

"Very well, make a huckster of him," said Pantaleone angrily. "But Giovan' Battista would not have acted thus, even though a confectioner himself."

"Giovan' Battista, my husband, was a reasonable man—and if he was a little hot-headed in his youth. . . ."

But the old man refused to listen and went away, repeating reproachfully: "Ah, Giovan' Battista!" Gemma exclaimed that if Emile felt the stirrings of patriotism and wished to devote all his energy to the emancipation of Italy, it would be permissible to sacrifice an assured future for the sake of so lofty and sacred a cause—but not for the theatre. Here Frau Lenore began to show signs of agitation and implored her daughter not to lead her brother astray and remain content with being such a desperate Republican herself. With these words, Frau Lenore moaned and began complaining of pain in her head, which was "fit to burst." Frau Lenore spoke to her daughter in French out of respect to the visitor.

Gemma immediately started tending her mother, blowing gently on her forehead, which she first moistened with eau-de-Cologne, gently kissing her cheek, laying her head on the pillow, forbidding her to talk—and again kissing her. Then, turning to Sanin, she began telling him, in a bantering tone which did not conceal her genuine emotion, what a wonderful mother she had and what a beauty she used to be. "But why do I say used to be—she's lovely now! Look at her, look what beautiful eyes she has!"

Gemma rapidly produced a white handkerchief from her pocket and covered her mother's face with it, then slowly pulling the hem down, gradually exposed the forehead, eyebrows and eyes of Frau Lenore; she waited a moment and asked her mother to open her eyes. The latter obeyed. Gemma gave an admiring cry (Frau Lenore's eyes were really very beautiful) and, rapidly drawing the handkerchief over the lower and less regular part of her mother's face, fell to kissing her again. Frau Lenore laughed, turning her head and pushing her daughter away with feigned violence. Gemma pretended to struggle with her mother, at the same time caressing her—not in the feline French way, but with Italian grace, in which there is always a sense of latent strength.

At last Frau Lenore declared that she was tired. . . . Gemma immediately advised her to have a nap where she was, in the arm-chair, and "the Russian gentleman and I will be as quiet as little mice—*comme des petites souris*." Frau Lenore smiled in reply, closed her eyes, sighed once or twice, and fell into a light doze. Gemma dropped nimbly on to the seat beside her and remained perfectly motionless, only placing a finger to her lips now and then—her other hand supported the pillow beneath her mother's head—with a faint admonishing "sh!" and a sideways glance at Sanin if he permitted himself the slightest movement. In the end he, too, fell into a kind of trance, sitting motionless, as if spell-bound, absorbed in rapt admiration of the picture before him: the half-dark chamber lit up here and there by the crimson glow of fresh, full-blown roses in antique green tumblers; the sleeping woman, with modestly folded hands and kind weary face framed by the snowy whiteness of the pillow; the youthful creature, so sensitively alert—she, too, kind, wise, pure, as well as beautiful beyond words, her eyes so deep, so black, shadowed and yet gleaming. . . . What was all this? A dream? A fairy-tale? And how was it that *he* was here?

XI

The bell over the street-door tinkled. A peasant lad in a fur cap and red waistcoat entered the shop. There had not been a single customer since the morning. "You see what trade we do," Frau Lenore had remarked to Sanin, with a sigh while they were breakfasting. She dozed on, undisturbed; Gemma, afraid to remove her hand from beneath the pillow, whispered to Sanin: "Go and look after the shop for me."

Sanin immediately stepped into the shop on tiptoe. The lad asked for three ounces of peppermint lozenges.

"What am I to take from him?" asked Sanin in a whisper through the door.

"Six kreutzers," she whispered back.

Sanin measured out three ounces, looked round for some paper, twisted it into a cone, wrapped up the lozenges, spilled them, wrapped them up again, spilled them again, and at last handed the cone over the counter and took the customer's money. . . . The lad gazed at him in astonishment, his hat crushed against his stomach, while in the back-room Gemma sat holding her hand over her mouth, in fits of laughter. Hardly had the first customer departed, when another and yet another came into the shop. "Evidently I bring luck," thought Sanin. The second customer asked for a glass of syrup, and the one after, for six ounces of sweets. Sanin satisfied their wants, clattering zealously with spoons, moving dishes about and briskly plunging his fingers into boxes and jars. On reckoning up, it was found that he had sold the syrup cheap but had taken two kreutzers over the price of the sweets. Gemma could not suppress her hilarity, and Sanin himself was conscious of an indescribable gaiety, an extraordinary flow of spirits. He felt he could have stood behind the counter for an eternity, selling syrup and sweets, while that charming creature peeped through the open door with eyes of friendly mockery, and the summer sunshine penetrated the massed foliage of the chestnut-trees in front of the window, filling the whole room with the greenish gold of midday rays, midday shadows, and his heart was given up to a delicious laziness, to carefree joy, to youth—the first flush of youth.

The fourth customer demanded a cup of coffee; it became necessary to call in Pantaleone (Emile had not yet returned from Herr Klüber's shop). Sanin went in and sat beside Gemma again. To the intense satisfaction of her daughter, Frau Lenore was still dozing. "Mamma's migraine passes off in her sleep," she said. Sanin told her

—still in whispers, of course—of his “deals”; he informed himself, with the utmost gravity, of the price of the confectioner’s goods; Gemma named the prices with equal gravity, the two of them indulging in simultaneous inward laughter, as if well aware that they were acting an amusing comedy. Suddenly a hurdy-gurdy in the street struck up an aria from *Der Freischütz*: “*Durch die Felder, durch die Auen.*” The plaintive notes wailed, trembling and whistling in the still air. Gemma started. . . . “He’ll wake Mamma!” Sanin immediately rushed out into the street, thrust a few kreutzers into the organ-grinder’s hand to make him stop playing and go further away. When Sanin returned, Gemma thanked him with a slight nod and, smiling pensively, began humming almost inaudibly Weber’s charming melody, in which Max expresses all the wonders of first love. She then asked Sanin if he knew *Der Freischütz* and if he liked Weber, adding that though an Italian herself she liked *that* sort of music best of all. From Weber the talk shifted to poetry and romanticism, to Hoffmann, who was still widely read in those days.

And Frau Lenore slept on, even snoring slightly, while the rays of the sun thrust themselves in narrow strips through the shutters, moving imperceptibly but continually, travelling across the floor, over the furniture, over Gemma’s dress, and the leaves and petals of the flowers.

XII

It appeared that Gemma was not particularly fond of Hoffmann, that she actually found him—a bore. The misty, fantastic northern element in his stories was alien to her bright, southern nature. “They’re just fairy-tales, they were written for children!” she declared, not without scorn. She was vaguely conscious, too, of the lack of poetry in Hoffmann. But there was one story, she could

not remember its title, which she simply loved; though, come to think of it, it was only the beginning that she liked—the end she had either not read, or had forgotten. It was about a young man who met a Greek girl of exquisite beauty, in—yes, in a confectioner's shop; the girl was followed about everywhere by a mysterious, sinister old man. The young man fell in love with her at first sight; she had looked at him so piteously, as if begging him to set her free. He had gone away for a moment, and when he got back to the confectioner's, neither the girl nor the old man was there any more; he had rushed off in search of her, continually coming upon their tracks, ever pursuing them, but had never, for all his strivings, been able to overtake them anywhere. The beautiful maiden had disappeared forever, but he was unable to forget her imploring glance and was always tortured by the thought that he had perhaps allowed the happiness of his whole life to slip through his fingers.

This may not have been precisely the ending Hoffmann had given to his tale, but it was the way it ended and remained in Gemma's memory.

"I believe," she said, "such meetings and partings are more frequent than we think."

Sanin fell silent. . . . But after a minute or two he turned the conversation on Herr Klüber. It was the first time he had mentioned him; he had not given a thought to him till that moment.

Now it was Gemma's turn to be silent, and she nibbled thoughtfully at the nail of a forefinger, with averted glance. Then she broke out in praises of her fiancé, mentioned the picnic he had arranged for the morrow, cast a rapid glance at Sanin and again lapsed into silence.

Sanin racked his brains for something to talk about.

Emile burst into the room noisily, waking Frau Lenore. . . . His appearance on the scene was a relief to Sanin.

Frau Lenore rose from her chair. Pantaleone came in to say dinner was ready. The family friend, the one-time opera singer, the servant, also performed the functions of a cook.

XIII

Sanin sat on after dinner was over. The appalling heat still served as a pretext for not letting him go, and when it abated, they invited him into the garden to drink coffee in the shade of the acacias. Sanin accepted the invitation. He felt very happy. In the still, monotonous, even flow of life there lies hidden a potent charm, and he yielded to it with enjoyment, demanding nothing particular from the present day, heedless of the morrow, unmindful of the day before. Merely to be near a girl like Gemma was worth much. He would soon part with her and probably forever; but while, as in Uhland's ballad, the same magic barque bore them over life's docile stream—then, traveller, rejoice and be happy! Everything seemed charming and delightful to the happy traveller. Frau Lenore invited him to play *tresette* with her and Pantaleone, taught him the not very intricate Italian game of cards, and won several kreutzers from him—and he was delighted; Pantaleone, at Emile's request, put Tartaglia the poodle through his paces, and Tartaglia jumped over a stick, "spoke" (that is to say, barked), sneezed, shut the door with his nose, brought a worn slipper to his master, and finally, an ancient shako perched on his head, acted Marshal Bernadotte undergoing bitter reproaches for his treachery from the Emperor Napoleon. The part of Napoleon, it is needless to say, was taken by Pantaleone, and very well acted: he folded his arms across his chest, pulled a cocked hat over his eyes, and spoke rudely and harshly in French, but what French, dear God! Tartaglia sat huddled up at his master's feet, his tail between his legs, blinking guilt-

ily and looking up obliquely from beneath the shako, which was perched awry on his head; every time Napoleon raised his voice, Bernadotte got on to his hind legs. "*Fuori, traditore!*" shouted Napoleon at last, forgetting in the heat of emotion that he ought to have kept up his French nationality to the end, and Bernadotte rushed headlong beneath the sofa, only to come back again immediately, barking joyfully, as if to show that the performance was over. The spectators all laughed heartily—none more than Sanin.

Gemma had an incessant, delightful laugh, interspersed with the most amusing shrill squeals. . . . Oh, her laugh! Sanin could have kissed her for those squeals alone!

At last night came. It was time to take himself off. After repeated farewells, in the course of which he said "Till tomorrow" again and again to each in turn (Emile and he actually kissed), Sanin went back to his hotel, carrying with him the image of the young girl, laughing, pensive, quiet and even indifferent by turns—but attractive in all these moods. Her eyes, sometimes wide open and shining, joyous as the day, sometimes half veiled by her eye-lashes, deep and dark as night, rose constantly before him, encroaching upon all other images and conceptions in a manner that was strangely sweet.

To Herr Klüber and to his own reasons for remaining in Frankfort—in a word, to all that had troubled him the previous day—he now gave not a moment's thought.

XIV

But it is time to say a word or two about Sanin himself.

In the first place he was a most prepossessing young man. Tall, slender, with pleasing, slightly blurred features, kindly blue eyes, golden hair, a pink-and-white

complexion, and, still more important, an expression that was simple and carefree, confiding and frank, at first sight even a little foolish, the expression by which in former times the children of respectable upper-class families could be immediately identified, "Papa's boys," nice little gentlemen, born and bred in our boundless country districts amidst the sparsely wooded steppe; a halting gait, a lisping intonation, a child-like smile if you so much as looked his way.... Finally freshness and health—above all an all-pervading mildness—and there you have Sanin. And in the second place, he was no fool and had acquired a certain amount of knowledge. He had retained his freshness despite his foreign travels; he was little acquainted with the torturing anxieties which beset some of the best young men of those times.

Our writers, after a vain search for "new types," have begun of late to portray young people who have made up their minds to be fresh at all costs, and are about as fresh as Flensburg oysters imported to St. Petersburg. Sanin did not resemble these. Since we are going in for comparisons, he was more like an overgrown, recently grafted young apple-tree in our black-earth orchards, or, rather, he was like a colt from some old-time gentleman's stud—a sensitive three-year-old, well-groomed, glossy, with thick ankles, only just beginning to be broken in. Those who met Sanin in after days, when life had mauled him badly and his youthful chubbiness had disappeared, saw quite another man in him.

The next day, while Sanin was still in bed, Emile burst into his room in festive attire, a cane in his hand, his hair plastered down with pomatum, and announced that Herr Klüber would be there in a minute in the carriage, that the weather promised to be marvellous, that they were all

quite ready, but that Mamma was not going, because she had a headache again. He hurried Sanin, assuring him that there was not a moment to be lost. And indeed, Herr Klüber found Sanin still engaged on his toilet. He knocked at the door, entered the room, bowed low, expressed his readiness to wait as long as Sanin liked and sat down, his hat resting lightly on his knees. The worthy shopman was dressed up to the nines and heavily scented, his every movement accompanied by a whiff of the most subtle perfumes. He arrived in a capacious open carriage dignified by the name of landau, to which was harnessed a pair of tall, powerful, if not exactly beautiful, horses. A quarter of an hour later Sanin, Herr Klüber and Emile rolled triumphantly up in this very carriage to the porch of the confectioner's. Frau Lenore stoutly refused to take part in the excursion; Gemma wanted to stay with her mother, but the latter fairly turned her out of the house.

"I don't need anyone," she assured them. "I shall sleep. I would send Pantaleone with you, but there'll be no one to stand behind the counter."

"May we take Tartaglia?" begged Emile.

"Of course you may."

Tartaglia immediately clambered joyfully on to the box-seat and sat there, licking his chops; it was obvious that he was used to this sort of outing. Gemma put on a big straw hat trimmed with brown ribbon; the brim was turned down in front and protected almost the whole of her face from the sun's rays. The shade it cast ended just at her lips, as pink and virginally delicate as the petals of a cabbage-rose, her teeth gleaming shyly, like a child's. Gemma sat on the back seat, next to Sanin; Herr Klüber and Emile sat opposite. The white figure of Frau Lenore appeared at a window; Gemma waved her handkerchief to her, and the horses started at a trot.

Soden is a small town about half an hour from Frankfort. It is situated picturesquely on a spur of the Taunus Hills, and is known in Russia for its mineral springs, which are supposed to be good for people with weak chests. The people of Frankfort mostly go there for entertainment, for Soden boasts a fine park and several *Wirtschaften* where beer and coffee may be imbibed in the shade of tall lime-trees and maples. The road from Frankfort to Soden follows the right bank of the Main and is lined with fruit-trees. While the carriage rolled smoothly over the excellent highway, Sanin furtively observed the relations between Gemma and her fiancé. It was the first time he had seen them together. She was perfectly calm and collected, though rather more reserved and serious than usual; he looked like an indulgent tutor, allowing himself and his charges a little harmless, polite enjoyment. Sanin could discern no special attentions to Gemma in him, what the French call *empressement*. It was obvious that Herr Klüber regarded this little affair as settled and, therefore, saw no reason to make any particular fuss or to be particularly moved. But his condescension never deserted him for a moment! During the long walk before dinner over the wooded slopes and valleys around Soden, even while enjoying the beauties of Nature, he behaved to this Nature with the same invariable condescension, shot through, at certain moments, by a kind of official severity. Thus, for example, he remarked of a certain stream that its course along the valley was too straight, that it ought to have taken a few picturesque windings; nor could he approve of the behaviour of a bird, a finch, whose trilling he found monotonous. Gemma showed no weariness and even seemed to be enjoying herself; but Sanin could no longer find in her the Gemma he had known; it was not that any shadow lay on her fea-

tures, her beauty had never been so radiant, but she seemed to have retreated into herself. Opening her parasol, she kept on her gloves and walked along sedately, with unhurried steps, as behoved a well brought-up young woman, and spoke very little. Emile, too, seemed under a strain, and Sanin, of course, still more. Among other things the fact that the conversation was carried on in German embarrassed him a little. Tartaglia was the only one at his ease. He rushed, barking furiously, at any thrushes which crossed his path, leaping over ditches, stumps, and uprooted trees, jumping headlong into water, lapping it up hastily, shaking himself, whining, only to be off the next moment like an arrow, his red tongue reaching almost to his shoulder. Herr Klüber, for his part, did everything he considered necessary for the entertainment of his guests; he invited them to sit down in the shade of a spreading oak, drew from one of his side-pockets a small book entitled *Knallerbsen—oder du sollst und wirst lachen* (*Squibs, or You Must and Will Laugh*) and began reading aloud the killingly funny anecdotes in which the booklet abounded. He read about a dozen, but they aroused little mirth. Sanin alone, for politeness' sake, tried to grin, and Herr Klüber himself gave a brief, business-like, and at the same time condescending laugh at the end of each anecdote. By twelve o'clock the whole company returned to Soden, to the best tavern in the town.

The time had come to order dinner.

Herr Klüber suggested they should dine *im Gartensalon*, a summer-house closed in on all sides. But here Gemma unexpectedly rebelled, saying that she would only dine in the open air, in the garden, at one of the little tables set in front of the tavern; that she was tired of seeing the same faces all the time and wanted to see some fresh ones. There were already groups of newly-arrived guests seated at a few of the tables.

While Herr Klüber, indulgently submitting to the "whim of his fiancée," went to consult the head-waiter, Gemma stood quite still, her eyes lowered, her lips compressed; she could feel that Sanin was looking at her fixedly and questioningly, and this seemed to annoy her. At last Herr Klüber came back, saying that dinner would be ready in half an hour and proposing a game of skittles in the meantime, adding that it would give them an appetite, hee-heel! He was a magnificent bowls-player; before throwing the wooden ball, he struck a heroic attitude, showed off the play of his muscles, flung up his arm smartly, and balanced himself on one foot. He was an athlete in his own way, and his build was splendid. And his hands were so white and beautiful, and he wiped them on an Indian foulard which was so rich, adorned with such marvellous gilt arabesques!

The time came for dinner and the whole party trooped over to their table.

XVI

Everyone knows what a German dinner is like. Watery soup with knobby dumplings and cinnamon, boiled beef, as dry as a cork, with lumps of white fat sticking to it, slimy potatoes, flabby beet-root, chewed-looking horseradish, bluish eel with capers and vinegar, the meat-course served with jelly, and the inevitable *Mehlspeise*, a kind of pudding with sour red sauce. But the beer and the wine are splendid. The Soden tavern-keeper regaled his clients with precisely such a dinner. The meal itself, however, went fairly well. True, no particular liveliness was to be observed, nor did any show itself even when Herr Klüber drank a toast to "What we love best!" (*Was wir lieben!*) Everything was so very decent and respectable. After dinner coffee was served, thin, rust-coloured, real German coffee. Herr Klüber, like a true gentleman,

asked Gemma's permission to smoke a cigar. But suddenly something quite unforeseen occurred, something quite unpleasant, if not indecent.

At one of the neighbouring tables were seated a few officers from the Main garrison. It was clear from their glances and whisperings that Gemma's beauty had made an impression on them; one of them, who had probably been in Frankfort, kept looking at her as if he had seen her before: he must have known who she was. Suddenly he got up, glass in hand—the military gentlemen had been doing some hard drinking, there was an array of bottles on their table—and approached the table at which Gemma was seated. He was an extremely youthful, fair individual, with features which were quite pleasing, indeed prepossessing; but they were distorted by the wine he had drunk, the muscles of his cheeks twitched, his inflamed eyes rolled insolently. At first his boon companions endeavoured to restrain him, but soon gave it up—in fact, they were quite interested to see what would come of it.

Reeling a little, the officer came to a halt opposite Gemma and cried, with forced loudness, in a voice which, in spite of himself, betrayed an inner struggle: "I drink the health of the prettiest shop-girl in the whole of Frankfort, in the whole world!" (here he gulped down the contents of his glass), "and reward myself with this flower plucked by her divine fingers!" He picked up a rose lying on the table beside Gemma's plate. At first she was astonished and alarmed, turning deathly pale . . . then her fear gave way to indignation and she suddenly blushed to the roots of her hair, her eyes, fixed on the offender, growing at once dark and fiery, now filling with gloom, now glowing with irrepressible wrath. The officer seemed abashed by this glance; he murmured something inarticulate, bowed, and went back to his friends. They greeted him with laughter and mock applause.

Herr Klüber suddenly rose to his feet, drew himself up and put on his hat, saying in dignified, if not very loud tones: "Outrageous! An outrageous liberty! (*Unerhört! Unerhörte Frechheit!*)," at the same time calling for the waiter in a severe voice and demanding his bill immediately . . . and this was not all—he ordered the carriage, adding that decent people would be unable to go to the tavern, since they risked being insulted. At these words Gemma, who sat there motionless, her chest heaving violently, turned her glance upon Herr Klüber . . . looking at him with the same steady gaze that she had directed at the officer. . . . Emile was fairly trembling with rage.

"Get up, *Mein Fräulein*," said Herr Klüber, still speaking severely. "It isn't decent for you to stay here. We'll go inside, into the inn."

Gemma rose in silence; he stuck out his elbow, she put her hand in his arm, and he led her to the inn with majestic steps, which, like his whole bearing, grew more and more majestic and arrogant the further away he got from the place where they had dined. Poor Emile trailed after them.

But while Herr Klüber was settling with the waiter, to whom, by way of punishment, he gave not even the smallest tip, Sanin strode rapidly up to the table at which the officers were seated and addressed the one who had insulted Gemma (at that moment he was offering the rose in turns for his comrades to smell), saying very distinctly, in French: "What you have just done, Monsieur, is unworthy of an honest man, unworthy of the uniform you wear, and I have come to tell you that you are an ill-bred person!" The young man leaped to his feet, but one of the others, who was a little older, restrained him with a movement of his hand and made him sit down. Then, turning to Sanin, he asked, also in French: "Who are you? A relative, a brother of this young woman, or perhaps her betrothed?"

"I am a mere acquaintance of hers," cried Sanin. "I am a Russian. But I cannot sit calmly by and look on at such insolence. Here is my card and my address—*Mon-sieur l'officier* will be able to find me."

With these words Sanin flung a visiting-card on to the table, at the same time snatching up Gemma's rose, which one of the officers had dropped into his plate. The young man made another attempt to jump out of his chair, but his comrade restrained him again, with the words: "Be quiet, Dönhof!" (*Dönhof, sei still*). He then rose himself, saluted stiffly, and said to Sanin, not without a shade of respect in voice and manner, that an officer from their regiment would have the honour of calling on him at his rooms the next morning. Sanin replied with a brief nod and returned hurriedly to his companions.

Herr Klüber pretended not to have noticed either Sanin's absence or his conversation with the officers. He urged on the coachman who was harnessing the horses, fuming over his slow movements. Gemma, too, said nothing to Sanin, did not so much as glance at him. But her knitted brows, her pale, compressed lips, her very stillness, showed her agitation. The only one who obviously desired to speak to Sanin, to question him, was Emile. He had seen Sanin go up to the officers and hand them something white—a scrap of paper—it might have been a note or a card. . . . The poor lad's heart beat violently, his cheeks burned, he was ready to throw his arms round Sanin's neck, ready to cry, or to go this very minute with Sanin and, together with him, smash those beastly officers to smithereens. But he mastered the impulse, contenting himself with following attentively every movement his noble Russian friend made.

At last the coachman finished harnessing the horses, and the whole company got into the carriage. Emile

jumped on to the box-seat, after Tartaglia. He felt more at ease there, and did not have to look at Klüber, whom he now detested with all his soul.

Herr Klüber held forth the whole way home . . . and held forth alone. Nobody contradicted him, nobody, but then nobody agreed with him, either. He made the very most of the mistake it had been not to heed him when he had proposed dining in the closed summer-house. There would have been none of these unpleasantnesses if they had. He then uttered a few harsh criticisms, with a touch of liberalism in them, of the unpardonable way in which the government indulged the officers, not looking after their discipline, while it failed to show adequate respect to the civilian element in society (*das bürgerliche Element in der Societät*), and how, owing to this, discontent was on the increase, from which it was but a short step to revolution, a lamentable example of which (here he gave a sigh at once sympathetic and severe), a lamentable example of which was afforded by France. He did not fail to remark, however, that he himself revered authority and would never, no, never, be a revolutionary, though nevertheless unable to refrain from expressing his . . . disapproval . . . when faced with such licentiousness. Here he added a few more commonplaces regarding morality and immorality, respectability and self-respect.

Throughout this harangue Gemma, who had appeared somewhat displeased with Herr Klüber even during the walk before dinner—this was why she had kept Sanin at a distance and seemed embarrassed by his presence—showed obvious signs of being ashamed of her fiancé. Towards the end of the drive she began to suffer in real earnest and though, as before, she refrained from speaking to Sanin, a moment came when she suddenly cast an imploring glance at him. . . . For his part, the pity he felt

for her was greater than his indignation with Herr Klüber. In his heart he was vaguely glad of all that had happened during the day, despite the fact that he expected a challenge the next morning.

At last the agonizing *partie de plaisir* came to an end. While helping Gemma out of the carriage in front of the confectioner's, Sanin silently placed the rose which he had recovered into her hand. She blushed crimson, pressed his hand and instantly tucked the rose away somewhere. He did not wish to go into the house, though evening was only just coming on. Nor did she invite him to go in. Moreover, Pantaleone appeared in the doorway announcing that Frau Lenore was in bed. Emilio took a shy leave of Sanin; he seemed to almost shun him—his wonder at Sanin's conduct was so very great! Klüber drove Sanin to his hotel and bade him farewell with ceremonious courtesy. Even the well-balanced German, for all his self-assurance, felt awkward. Indeed, everyone did.

Sanin himself, however, quickly shook off the feeling of awkwardness. Its place was taken by a mood which was vague, but pleasant, even exultant. He paced up and down his room, dismissing all thought from his mind and whistling—well-pleased with himself.

XVII

"I will wait till ten for the officer to come and say what he has to say," he told himself the next morning, as he completed his toilet. "After that he can look for me." But Germans are early risers, and the clock had hardly struck nine when the waiter informed Sanin that Second-Lieutenant (*der Herr Seconde Lieutenant*) von Richter wished to see him. Hastily donning his coat, Sanin told the waiter to show the gentleman in. He was surprised by the youthful appearance of his visitor, who looked scarcely

more than a boy. Herr von Richter tried to fix an expression of dignity on his beardless countenance, but did not succeed in the least; he could not even conceal his embarrassment, and in seating himself on a chair, tripped over his sword and almost fell. Stuttering and stammering, he informed Sanin in vile French that he had been charged by his friend Baron von Dönhof to demand from Herr von Zanin an apology for the insulting expressions he had employed the day before; and that, in case of a refusal on the part of Herr von Zanin, Baron von Dönhof desired satisfaction. Sanin replied that he had no intention of apologizing but was ready to give satisfaction. Herr von Richter then, still stammering, inquired with whom and at what hour and place he would have the honour of conducting the necessary preliminaries. Sanin replied that Herr von Richter might return in two hours, during which time Sanin would try and find a second. ("Who the devil shall I find?" he asked himself.) Herr von Richter rose and began to take his leave . . . but stopped in the doorway as if assailed by remorse, turned to Sanin and muttered that his friend, Baron von Dönhof, was forced to admit to himself that he had been . . . to a certain extent . . . to blame for yesterday's incident . . . and was therefore willing to be satisfied with a slight apology—*des exghizes léchères*. To this Sanin replied that he had no intention of making any apologies, whether slight or profound, since he did not consider himself in any way to blame.

"In that case," rejoined von Richter, blushing still more, "there must be an exchange of friendly shots—*des gouns de bisdolet à l'amiaple*."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," said Sanin. "Are we to shoot into the air?"

"Oh no, not that!" stammered the second-lieutenant, now completely abashed. "I only thought that, since those

involved are men of honour . . . but I will speak to your second—" Here he broke off and departed.

Sanin sank into a chair the moment the lieutenant had gone and gazed fixedly at the floor. "What's it all about? What strange quirk has my life suddenly taken? My whole past, my whole future seem suddenly to have become meaningless, and nothing is left but the prospect of fighting a duel in Frankfort." He remembered a crazy aunt of his who had danced continually to the refrain of:

*Come here,
My dear!
Lieutenant dear,
Be my little cavalier!*

And he burst out laughing, singing as the madwoman had sung:

*Lieutenant dear,
Be my little cavalier!*

"But I must do something about it, there isn't much time!" he exclaimed loudly, and jumping up, saw before him Pantaleone, holding a note in his hand.

"I knocked several times but you did not answer. I thought you were out," muttered the old man and handed him the note. "It's from Signorina Gemma."

Sanin took the note mechanically, unsealed it and glanced through it. Gemma wrote that she was much disturbed on account of a certain affair which he knew about, and wished to see him immediately.

"The signorina is anxious," began Pantaleone, who evidently knew what was in the note. "She told me to go and see what you were doing and bring you back."

Sanin glanced at the old Italian—and meditated. A sudden idea flashed across his mind. At first it seemed to him almost impossibly incongruous. . . .

"And yet . . . why not?" he asked himself.

"Monsieur Pantaleone!" he said aloud.

The old man started, dug his chin into his cravat, and gazed at Sanin.

"You know what happened yesterday?" continued Sanin.

Pantaleone mumbled his lips and tossed back his huge forelock.

"I do."

(Emile had told him all as soon as he got home.)

"Ah, you do. Well then. . . . An officer has just been to see me. That cad challenges me to a duel. I accepted his challenge. But I have no second. Would *you* like to be my second?"

Pantaleone started, raising his eyebrows till they disappeared beneath his dangling forelock.

"And must you really fight?" he at last brought out in Italian. Until this moment he had been speaking French.

"I must. Any other course would be to disgrace myself forever."

"H'm. And if I refuse to be your second—you will look for someone else?"

"I most certainly will."

Pantaleone lowered his eyes. "Permit me, however, Signor de Zanini, to inquire whether your duel will not cast a shadow on the reputation of a certain person?"

"I don't think it will. But however that may be, there is no alternative."

"H'm." Pantaleone plunged still deeper into his cravat. "And what about that *ferroflucto Cluberio*?" he suddenly exclaimed, raising his face.

"Him? Nothing!"

"*Che!*" Pantaleone shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "In any case, I feel bound to thank you," he said after a pause, in quavering tones, "for recognizing me, in my present state of humiliation, as an honourable man—*un galant'uomo*. By this act you have shown yourself to

be a real *galant'uomo*. But I must think over your proposal."

"There is no time for that, dear Monsieur Ci . . . Cip-pa. . . ."

"...tola," prompted the old man. "I ask for only one hour for reflection. The daughter of my benefactors is involved. . . . And I must think it over—I am bound to. . . . You shall know my decision in an hour—in three-quarters of an hour."

"Good! I will wait."

"And now . . . what answer am I to give Signorina Gemma?"

Sanin picked up a sheet of paper and jotted down on it: "Do not be anxious, my dear friend, I will be with you in three hours and will tell you everything. Best thanks for your sympathy." This note he handed to Pantaleone.

The old man tucked it carefully into his side-pocket and made for the door, repeating: "In an hour!" But suddenly he turned back, ran up to Sanin, seized his hand and pressed it to his jabot, exclaiming: "Noble youth! Great heart! (*Nobil giovanotto! Gran cuore!*) Permit a weak old man (*a un vecchiotto*) to press your valiant hand (*la vostra valorosa destra!*)."

He then leaped back a step, raised both his hands, and was gone.

Sanin looked after him . . . picked up a newspaper and settled down to read it. But his eyes scanned the lines in vain, he could not understand a word. . . .

XVIII

An hour later the waiter again came to Sanin, this time to hand him an ancient, stained visiting-card, on which were inscribed the words: "Pantaleone Cippatola, of Varese, singer to the Court (*cantante di camera*) of His Royal Highness the Duke of Modena"; and on the heels of the waiter came Pantaleone himself. He had

changed from head to foot and now appeared in a rusty-black frock-coat and a white piqué waistcoat, over which a pinchbeck chain was elaborately draped. A heavy cornelian seal dangled low over tight-fitting black trousers. In his right hand he held a black hat made from rabbit-felt, in his left, a pair of thick suède gloves. His cravat was even broader and higher than usual, and a pin mounted with a "cat's eye" (*oeil de chat*) stone was stuck in his starched jabot. His right forefinger was adorned by a signet ring in the form of two hands clasping a flaming heart. The old man's clothes emitted a stale smell—a blend of camphor and musk. The anxious solemnity of his bearing would have struck the most indifferent spectator. Sanin rose to meet him.

"I am your second," announced Pantaleone in French, bowing low from the waist, standing with the toes of his boots apart, as dancers do. "I have come for instructions. Do you wish to fight to the bitter end?"

"Why to the bitter end, my dear Monsieur Cippatola? I have not the slightest intention of withdrawing the words I said yesterday, but I am not bloodthirsty. Wait, my opponent's second should be here in a minute. I will go into the next room while you and he come to an agreement. Believe me, I shall never forget your services, and thank you from my heart."

"Honour above all," replied Pantaleone and sank into an arm-chair without waiting for Sanin to ask him to sit down. "If that *ferroflucto spiccebubbio*," he said, jumbling together French and Italian words, "if that counter-jumper Cluberio cannot understand where his duty lies, or if he is a poltroon—all the worse for him! He's a worthless creature, that's all! As to the terms of the duel—I am your second, and your interests are sacred to me! When I lived in Padua, a regiment of white dragoons was stationed there, and I became intimate with several of the officers. I know their code of honour well.

And I often discussed these questions with your *Principe Tarbuski*. . . Will that second soon be here?"

"I expect him any minute—oh, here he comes!" added Sanin, glancing out of the window.

Pantaleone rose, looked at his watch, arranged his forelock, and hastily thrust an end of tape dangling from his trouser-leg into the top of his boot. The youthful second-lieutenant entered, still red and embarrassed.

Sanin introduced the seconds to one another—"Monsieur Richter, souslieutenant!—Signor Zippatola, artiste!"

The second-lieutenant showed a certain surprise at the appearance of the old man. What would he have said if someone could have whispered into his ear at that moment that the "artiste" just introduced to him was also skilled in the culinary art? But Pantaleone tried to look as if taking part in the arrangement of a duel was the most everyday affair to him. No doubt the memories of his theatrical past came to his aid here, and he acted the part of second just as if it really were a theatrical role. There was a moment of silence on either side.

Pantaleone was the first to break it.

"Shall we begin?" he said, playing with the cornelian seal.

"By all means," replied the second-lieutenant. "But . . . the presence of one of the principals. . ."

"I will leave you at once, gentlemen!" exclaimed Sanin, and he bowed and withdrew to the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

Throwing himself on the bed, he began thinking of Genma. . . . But the conversation of the seconds came to him through the closed door. It was carried on in French; both parties murdered the language ruthlessly, each after his own fashion. Pantaleone again brought in the dragoons at Padua, the *Principe Tarbuski*; the second-lieutenant referred to the *exghizes léchères* and the *goups à l'amiable*. But the old man would hear of no *exghizes*!

To Sanin's horror he suddenly began telling his interlocutor of a certain young and innocent maiden, whose little finger was worth more than all the officers in the world (*oune zeune damigella innoucenta, qu'a ella sola dans soun pèti doa vale piu que toutt le zouffissié del mondo!*)... reiterating fiercely, over and over again: "It is a disgrace! A disgrace! (*E ouna onta, ouna onta!*)" At first the second-lieutenant took no notice, but soon an angry tremor made itself heard in the young man's voice, and he remarked that he had not come to listen to a lecture on morals....

"At your age it is always useful to hear righteous words!" exclaimed Pantaleone.

Every now and then the discussion between the honourable seconds became heated; it went on for over an hour, but at last the following conditions were laid down: "Baron von Dönhof and Monsieur de Sanine to meet the following morning at ten o'clock, in a small wood in the vicinity of Hanau, and fire at a distance of twenty paces. Each party to fire twice at a signal from the seconds; the pistols to be single-triggered and not rifle-barrelled." Herr von Richter departed, and Pantaleone solemnly opened the door into the bedroom to communicate the result of the conference, exclaiming: "*Bravo, Russo! bravo giovanotto!* You will be the victor!"

A few minutes later they both set off for the Roselli shop. Sanin made Pantaleone promise to keep the matter of the duel a profound secret. For all reply the old man raised his finger and screwed up his eyes, whispering twice in rapid succession: "*Segretezza!* (Secret!)" He seemed to have grown younger, his very step had become lighter. These extraordinary events, unpleasant though they might be, took him back to the days in which he had himself received and issued challenges—on the stage, of course. Baritones, as is well known, are very fond of swaggering.

Emile came running out to greet Sanin—he had been watching for his arrival for over an hour—and whispered hurriedly in his ear that his mother knew nothing of yesterday's unpleasantness and that not the faintest allusion must be made to it, adding that he was again being sent to the shop . . . but that he had no intention of going there, he would hide somewhere. Having communicated all this in the space of a few seconds, he suddenly pressed himself against Sanin's shoulder and kissed him impulsively, before running off down the street. Sanin was met inside the shop by Gemma, who tried to say something but could not. Her lips trembled slightly, and her eyes narrowed, darting rapid glances from side to side. He hastened to soothe her with the assurance that the matter had ended . . . in nothing.

"Didn't anyone come to see you today?" she asked.

"I had a visitor—we discussed the matter and . . . and came to the most satisfactory conclusion."

Gemma went back behind the counter.

"She doesn't believe me," he told himself . . . nevertheless he went into the back-room, where he found Frau Lenore.

Her headache was better, but she was in a melancholy mood. She smiled cordially at him, at the same time warning him that he would find her bad company today, for she was in no state to entertain him. When he sat down beside her, he noticed that her eyelids were red and swollen.

"What's the matter with you, Frau Lenore? Surely you haven't been crying?"

"Hush! . . ." she whispered, nodding towards the door of the room in which her daughter was. "Don't say that . . . out loud."

"But what made you cry?"

"Ah, Monsieur Sanin, I don't know myself."

"Has anyone hurt your feelings?"

"Oh, no. . . . I just felt so sad all of a sudden. I remembered Giovan' Battista . . . my own youth . . . and how quickly everything has passed. I am getting an old woman, my friend . . . and I simply cannot get used to the idea. I feel the same as ever . . . but old age—there it is, there it is!" Tears welled up in Frau Lenore's eyes. "I see you look at me in astonishment. . . . But you, too, will grow old, my friend, and then you will know how bitter it is!"

Sanin tried to console her, reminding her of her children, in whom she could renew her own youth, he even tried making fun of her, declaring that she was fishing for compliments . . . but she begged him, in no joking tones, to stop, and for the first time in his life he realized that this kind of misery, the misery arising from the consciousness of age, was not to be consoled or distracted. The only thing to do was to wait for it to pass. He suggested a game of *tresette* and could scarcely have thought of anything better. She consented willingly and seemed to cheer up.

Sanin played cards with her till dinner, and again after dinner. Pantaleone also took part in the game. Never had his forelock fallen so low over his forehead, never had his chin dug so deep into his cravat. His every movement was fraught with a solemnity so tense that anyone looking at him could not fail to wonder what secret this man was guarding so assiduously.

But—*segredenza, segredenza!*

All through the day he exerted himself by all possible means to show his profound respect for Sanin. He served him first at table, passing over the ladies with an air of determined gravity. During the card game he gave up the pool to Sanin and said not a word when he revoked; he announced, quite irrelevantly, that the Rus-

sians were the most magnanimous, valorous and determined people in the world.

"Old sly-boots!" said Sanin to himself.

It was not so much the unexpected frame of mind in which he had found Madame Roselli that surprised him, as the way in which her daughter treated him. She did not exactly avoid him, on the contrary, she sat quite near him almost all the time, listened when he spoke, looked at him. But she stubbornly abstained from entering into conversation with him, and whenever he addressed her, rose quietly and went out of the room for a few minutes. Then she came back again and seated herself somewhere in the corner, keeping very still as if meditating and wondering . . . above all wondering. At last even Frau Lenore noticed her unusual behaviour and asked her once or twice what was the matter with her.

"Nothing," replied Gemma. "I'm like that sometimes, you know."

"That's perfectly true," her mother agreed.

Thus passed a whole long day, which was neither very animated nor particularly languid, neither gay nor dull. If Gemma had behaved differently, Sanin might have been unable to resist the temptation to show off a little—or he might have simply yielded to emotions of sadness on the eve of a parting which might be forever. But since he was never able to so much as speak to Gemma, he had to content himself, during the quarter of an hour before coffee was served, with striking minor chords on the piano.

Emile came back late and retired early so as to avoid being questioned about Herr Klüber. The time came for Sanin to leave.

He began saying good-bye to Gemma. For some reason he remembered the parting between Lensky and Olga, in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. He pressed her hand firmly and tried to look into her face, but she turned slightly, freeing her fingers.

All the stars were out when he stepped on to the porch. And oh, the innumerable hosts—great, small, yellow, red, blue, white! All of them glowed and shimmered, twinkling incessantly. There was no moon, but even without a moon every object stood out distinctly in the thin, shadowless dusk. Sanin walked to the end of the street. . . . He had no desire to go home just then, all he felt was the need to wander about and enjoy the pure air. He retraced his steps and had hardly got back to the house in which the Roselli shop was situated, when one of the windows overlooking the street opened with a sudden noise, and in its empty black square (there was no light in the room) a woman's figure appeared, and he heard his name called:

"Monsieur Dimitril"

He rushed to the window . . . it was Gemma.

She was leaning on the window-sill, bending out.

"Monsieur Dimitri," she began in cautious tones, "I have wanted all day to give you something . . . but couldn't make up my mind to do it. But now, seeing you again all of a sudden, it seemed to me that it was fated. . . ."

Gemma stopped involuntarily at this word. She was unable to go on. An extraordinary thing happened at that moment.

Out of a profound stillness, while the sky remained perfectly cloudless, there suddenly arose a blast of wind so violent that the very earth seemed to quake, the transparent light of the stars quivered and shimmered, and the air itself seemed to whirl. This blast was not cold but warm, indeed sultry, it struck the trees, the roofs and walls of the houses, the road, blew off Sanin's hat, and worked havoc with Gemma's curls. Sanin's head was on a level with the window-sill, and he involuntarily

pressed close up to it, while Gemma clutched at his shoulders with both hands, her bosom pressed against his head. The terrific uproar lasted for about a minute. And then, like a flock of enormous birds taking flight, the squall, having expended its force, passed by . . . and profound stillness prevailed once more.

Raising his head, Sanin looked into a countenance so lovely, so alarmed, so excited, into eyes so immense, so awe-inspiring, so magnificent—such beauty was revealed to him, that his heart seemed to stop for a moment. Pressing to his lips a silky tress which had fallen on to his bosom, he was just able to bring out: "Oh, Gemma!"

"What was it? Lightning?" she asked, her gaze travelling into space, her bare arms still resting on his shoulders.

"Gemma!" repeated Sanin.

She gave a sigh and looked back into the room, and then, with a swift movement, drew a faded rose from the front of her dress and threw it to Sanin.

"I wanted to give you this flower. . . ."

He recognized the rose he had captured the day before.

But the window slammed, and behind the dark pane there was nothing to be seen, nothing, not a shimmer of white. . . .

Sanin returned to his hotel without his hat. . . . He did not even notice he had lost it.

XXI

He dropped off to sleep just before morning. And no wonder! Beneath the impact of the sudden summer whirlwind he had felt, almost instantaneously—not that Gemma was a beautiful girl, not that he found her extremely attractive, that he had known before . . . but that

he was . . . all but in love with her. Love had come upon him as suddenly as the whirlwind had. And now this idiotic duel! He was assailed by the most melancholy forebodings. Even if he were not killed . . . what could come of his love for this girl, for another man's betrothed? Even if this "other" proved to be not a very dangerous rival, and Gemma should come to love him, or perhaps loved him already. . . . What about it? What a question! A beautiful creature like that. . . .

He paced up and down the room, seated himself at the table, took out a sheet of paper, scribbled a few lines—and immediately blotted them out. . . . He thought of Gemma, the beautiful figure of Gemma framed in the dark window, in the starlight, her hair dishevelled by the sultry wind; he remembered her statuesque arms, like the arms of a Greek goddess, felt again their living weight on his shoulders. . . . Then he took up the rose she had thrown out of the window, and it seemed to him that its fading petals emitted a perfume more subtle than the usual smell of roses.

"And what if he were killed or maimed?"

He did not go to bed but fell asleep fully dressed on the sofa.

Someone tapped him on the shoulder. . . .

He opened his eyes and saw Pantaleone before him.

"He sleeps like Alexander the Great on the eve of the battle of Babylon!" exclaimed the old man.

"Why, what's the time?" asked Sanin.

"A quarter to seven; it's a two hours' journey to Hanau, and we must be the first to arrive. The Russians are always ahead of their foes. I have hired the best carriage in Frankfort."

Sanin began washing.

"And where are the pistols?"

"That *ferroflucto Tedesco* is bringing the pistols. He's bringing a doctor, too."

Pantaleone was obviously trying to maintain his spirits at the high level of the day before; but when he got into the carriage and sat down beside Sanin, when the coachman cracked his whip and the horses started off at a gallop, a sudden change came over the friend of the Paduan dragoons. He seemed to be embarrassed, even nervous. Something within him seemed to have collapsed, like a badly built wall.

"What are we doing, my God, *santissima Madonna*?" he exclaimed in a shrill voice, clutching at the roots of his hair. "What am *I* doing, old fool, madman, *frenetico* that I am?"

Sanin laughed in surprise and put his arm round Pantaleone's waist, quoting the French saying: "*Le vin est tiré—il faut le boire.*"

"Yes, yes," replied the old man. "You and I will drink this cup to the dregs—but I am a madman nevertheless. I am a madman. Everything was so nice and peaceful . . . and all of a sudden—ta-ta, tra-ta-ta!"

"Like when the orchestra plays *tutti*," said Sanin with a forced smile. "But it's not your fault."

"I know it isn't. I should hope so. But it is very rash, all the same. *Diavolo! Diavolo!*" repeated Pantaleone, tossing back his forelock and sighing.

And the carriage rolled on and on.

. It was a glorious morning. The streets of Frankfort, only just beginning to wake up, were clean and snug. The windows shimmered like tinfoil, and when they passed beyond the toll-gates they could hear the loud warbling of larks overhead, in the blue but still pale sky. Suddenly, at a turn of the high road, a familiar figure appeared from behind a high poplar, took a few steps

towards them, and halted. Sanin looked again . . . my God! Emile!

"What! Does *he* know about it?" said Sanin, turning to Pantaleone.

"I told you I was a madman," moaned the unfortunate Italian, his voice almost rising to a shriek of despair. "That wretched boy gave me no peace all night, and at last, this morning, I told him all."

"There's your *segredazza*!" said Sanin to himself.

The carriage came up to where Emile stood. Sanin ordered the coachman to stop the horses and called "that wretched boy" to come nearer. Emile approached with uncertain steps; he was pale, as pale as he had been on the day of his heart-attack. He could hardly stand.

"What are you doing here?" Sanin asked him sternly. "Why aren't you at home?"

"Do let me go with you!" entreated Emile in trembling tones, his palms pressed together in supplication. His teeth chattered as if he were in a high fever. "I won't interfere! Take me with you, only take me with you!"

"If you have the slightest affection or respect for me," said Sanin, "you will go home instantly, or to Herr Klüber's shop, without saying a single word to anyone, and will wait for my return."

"Your return!" groaned Emile with a breaking voice. "And if you are. . ."

"Emile!" said Sanin, with a warning glance at the driver. "Pull yourself together! Go home, Emile, I beg you! Listen to me, my friend. You keep saying you love me. Well, then, go home—for my sake!"

He stretched out his hand. Emile leaped forward, sobbing, pressed Sanin's hand to his lips, and darted away from the road, starting at a run across the fields towards Frankfort.

"Another noble heart," murmured Pantaleone, but Sanin glanced moodily at him, and the old man huddled

into a corner of the seat. He knew he had been to blame; and his astonishment increased with every moment—could it really be *he* who was acting as second, *he* who had ordered the carriage and seen to everything, leaving his peaceful abode at six in the morning? To crown all, his aching legs were causing him dull pangs.

Sanin felt he must try to cheer him up, and struck the right vein, finding the words most apt to stimulate him.

"Where is your ancient spirit, honoured Signor Cippatola?" he said. "Where is *il antico valor*?"

Signor Cippatola drew himself up and frowned.

"*Il antico valor*?" he cried in a deep voice. "*Non e ancora spento* (there is still some left)—*il antico valor!*"

Drawing himself up again, he began speaking of his career, of the opera, of the great tenor Garcia, and by the time they got to Hanau he was another man. When you come to think of it, there is nothing in the world so powerful—and so powerless—as a word.

XXII

The little wood in which the battle was to take place was about a quarter of a mile from Hanau. Sanin and Pantaleone arrived first, as the latter had prophesied. They told the coachman to wait on the outskirts of the wood and plunged into the shade of a fairly dense copse. They had to wait about an hour.

Sanin did not find the waiting particularly irksome. He paced up and down the narrow path, listening to the singing of the birds, following the flight of the dragon-flies, and, like most Russians in a similar situation, tried not to think. Only once did he succumb to thought, and that was when he came upon a young lime-tree, probably struck down by yesterday's sudden storm. It was obvi-

ously dying, all its leaves had shrivelled up. "What is this? An omen?" passed through his mind, but the next minute he was whistling, leaping over the fallen trunk of the lime-tree, and striding along the path. Pantaleone, on the contrary, kept up a continual grumbling, cursing the Germans, coughing, rubbing his back, his knees. He actually yawned in his agitation, and this made his small wizened countenance look very comic. Sanin almost burst out laughing when he looked at him.

At last the sound of wheels over the soft road reached their ears. "They're coming!" declared Pantaleone, drawing himself up and standing on the alert, not without, however, a momentary nervous tremor which he hastened to conceal by exclaiming very loudly "b-r-r-r" and remarking that it was pretty chilly this morning. The grass and leaves were soaked in profuse dew, but a sultry heat was penetrating the very heart of the wood.

The two officers soon came in sight beneath the shade of the trees. They were accompanied by a short stocky individual with a phlegmatic, almost drowsy countenance—this was the regimental surgeon. He carried an earthenware jug filled with water, in case of need, and a bag containing surgical instruments and bandages was slung over his left shoulder. He was obviously thoroughly accustomed to excursions of this sort, which formed one of his sources of income—each duel brought him eight chervontsi, four from each of the opposing parties. Herr von Richter carried the case of pistols, Herr von Dönhof twirled a little hunting-crop in his hand—no doubt he considered this the height of chic.

"Pantaleone," whispered Sanin to the old man, "if . . . I should be killed, anything might happen, you know, take a scrap of paper out of my side-pocket, there's a flower wrapped up in it, and give it to Signorina Gemma. D'you hear me? Do you promise?"

The old man cast a melancholy glance at him and

noded affirmation. . . . But God alone knows if he had understood what Sanin asked him to do.

The opponents and seconds exchanged bows in due form. The only person to remain perfectly unmoved was the doctor, who seated himself on the grass, yawning, as if to say: "There's no need for me to display chivalrous courtesy." Herr von Richter invited Herr "Tschibadola" to choose the place. Herr "Tschibadola" replied, his voice thick with emotion (the "wall" within him had again collapsed): "Do what you think best, dear sir; I will just look on. . . ."

And Herr von Richter started operations. He discovered, in the wood itself, a delightful glade, studded all over with flowers; he measured the paces, marked out a place at either end with a hastily sharpened stick, took the pistols out of their case, and squatted on the ground to load them—in a word, he did his utmost, continually mopping his perspiring countenance with a white handkerchief. Pantaleone, who followed close on his heels everywhere, seemed like a man in the grip of cold. Throughout these preliminaries the two opponents stood a little way off, looking like a couple of schoolboys who had been punished and were sulking at their teachers.

The decisive moment arrived. . . .

Each took his pistol in his hand. . . .

But here Herr von Richter remarked to Pantaleone that according to the rules of duelling he ought to address the opponents with a last word of advice and the exhortation to make it up, before uttering the fatal: "One! Two! Three!" That though this exhortation never led to anything, and was in fact the purest formality, by its means Herr "Tschibadola" shifted some of the responsibility from his shoulders; that such an allocution really came within the functions of a so-called impartial witness (*unparteiischer Zeuge*), but that, since there was no such

person present, he, von Richter, willingly gave up his claim to this privilege to his older colleague. Pantaleone, who had already managed to shrink behind a bush so as not to see the offending officer, at first understood not a word of Herr von Richter's speech, the more so that the latter spoke through his nose. The next minute, however, he roused himself, stepped forward eagerly, striking his chest violently with his fists, and yelled out hoarsely in his comical mixture of languages: "*A la la la. . . Che bestialità! Deux zeun 'ommes comme ça qué si battono—perchè? Che diavolo? Andate a casa!*"*

"I will not accept a reconciliation," said Sanin hastily.

"Nor I," repeated his opponent after him.

"Now shout 'one, two, three,'" said von Richter to the bewildered Pantaleone.

The latter hastily plunged into the thicket again, from which, with contorted limbs, screwed-up eyes, and averted head, he nevertheless cried at the top of his voice: "*Una . . . due . . . e tre!*"

Sanin fired first—and missed. His bullet struck the trunk of a tree with a resounding bang. Baron von Dönhof fired immediately after him, intentionally aiming to one side, and into the air.

A tense silence followed. . . . No one moved. Pantaleone gave a feeble groan.

"Is it your wish that we proceed?" asked Dönhof.

"Why did you fire into the air?" said Sanin.

"That's no business of yours."

"Do you mean to fire into the air the next time, too?" went on Sanin.

"Perhaps. I don't know."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" began von Richter. "The principals must not address one another. It's quite incorrect."

* "What brutality! Two young men like that, fighting! And what for? What the devil! Go home!"—*Ed.*

"I relinquish my right to fire," said Sanin and flung his pistol on the ground.

"And I do not wish to go on with the duel," cried von Dönhof, throwing down his pistol, too. "And in addition I am now ready to admit that I was wrong—the other day."

He stood indecisive for a moment, and then extended his hand doubtfully. Sanin went rapidly up to him and shook his hand. The two young men glanced smiling at one another, and the cheeks of both were flooded with colour.

"*Bravi! Bravi!*" shouted Pantaleone frantically, clapping his hands and starting up from the thicket like a tumbler-pigeon. The doctor, who had been seated a little apart, on the trunk of a felled tree, rose immediately, poured the water out of the jug, and strolled lazily to the outskirts of the wood.

"Honour is satisfied, and the duel is over," announced von Richter.

"*Fuori!*" yelled Pantaleone once more, his mind harking back to the past.

After exchanging bows with the officers and seating himself in the carriage, Sanin, it has to be admitted, felt his whole being permeated with a sensation which, while not exactly one of pleasure, was like the relaxation following upon an operation; but another feeling stirred in him simultaneously, a feeling akin to shame. . . . The encounter in which he had just played his part seemed to him utterly false, a conventional official routine, the usual officer-student affair. He remembered the phlegmatic doctor, remembered his smile, or rather the way he had wrinkled up his nose on seeing Sanin emerge from the wood almost arm in arm with Baron von Dönhof. And afterwards, when Pantaleone had paid the doc-

tor the four chervontsi which was his perquisite. . . . Ugh, something unpleasant in all this!

Yes, Sanin felt somewhat ashamed and guilty . . . but after all what else could he have done? He could not have allowed the insolent young officer to go unpunished, he could not have imitated Herr Klüber. He had come forward in defence of Gemma. . . . Very true, and yet his soul was uneasy, and he felt ashamed, almost guilty.

As for Pantaleone, he simply triumphed. He was suddenly filled with pride. A victorious general, returning from the field of a battle he had just won, could not have been more radiant with self-satisfaction. Sanin's behaviour during the duel had filled him with enthusiasm. He dubbed him hero and would listen neither to remonstrances nor entreaties. He compared him with a monument of marble or bronze—with the statue of the Commander in *Don Juan*. For himself he admitted he had felt a certain trepidation. "But I'm an artiste, you see, I have a nervous constitution, and you are the son of the snows and the granite cliffs."

Sanin was at his wit's end to calm the excited artiste.

Almost at the exact place in the road where, two hours before, they had come upon Emile, he again sprang out from behind a tree with a joyous cry, and waving his cap and leaping into the air, rushed headlong up to the carriage, almost falling under the wheels, clambered over the carriage-door without waiting for the horses to be pulled up, and flung himself upon Sanin.

"You are alive, you are not wounded!" he declared. "Forgive me, I did not obey you, I did not go back to Frankfort. . . . I couldn't! I waited for you here. . . . Tell me all about it. Did you . . . kill him?"

Sanin had difficulty in calming Emile and forcing him to sit down.

Pantaleone informed him with verbosity and obvious enjoyment of all the details of the duel, not failing, of course, to bring in again the bronze monument, the statue of the Commander. He actually stood up, setting his feet wide apart to keep his balance, crossed his hands over his chest and darted a withering glance over his shoulder, to represent Commander Sanin. Emile listened awe-struck, interrupting the narration with an occasional exclamation or rising hastily to kiss his heroic friend.

The wheels of the carriage resounded on the pavements of Frankfort and at last stopped before Sanin's hotel.

He was just ascending the stairs leading to the second storey, accompanied by his two followers, when a woman, whose face was covered by a veil, rushed impetuously out of the darkness of the corridor; she stopped short in front of Sanin, swayed slightly, gasped tremulously, and rushed headlong down the stairs and out into the street, where she disappeared, to the great astonishment of the waiter, who told Sanin this lady had been waiting for over an hour for the foreign gentleman to return. Momentary as the apparition had been, Sanin had had time to recognize Gemma. He had seen her eyes beneath the thick silk of her brown veil.

"Did Fräulein Gemma know, then?" he drawled, a note of vexation in his voice. He spoke in German, addressing Emile and Pantaleone, who followed close on his heels.

Emile coloured and showed signs of embarrassment.

"I had to tell her all about it," he stammered, "she guessed—and I simply couldn't. . . . But it doesn't matter any more, now," he added with sudden animation. "It's all ended so splendidly, and she has seen you safe and sound!"

Sanin turned from him.

"What a couple of chatterboxes you are!" he muttered in annoyance and went into his room, where he sat down on a chair.

"Don't be angry with me," pleaded Emile.

"Very well, I won't." (Sanin was really not angry—after all, he could hardly have wished for Gemma to know *nothing whatever* about it. . . .) "Very well—but there has been enough embracing. Go now . . . I want to be alone. I shall lie down for a sleep. I'm tired."

"A splendid idea!" exclaimed Pantaleone. "You need some rest. You have earned it thoroughly, noble Signor. Come on, Emile. On tiptoes! On tiptoes! Sh-shshsh!"

Sanin only said he wanted to sleep to get rid of his companions. But once alone, he really did become aware of considerable fatigue in all his limbs. He had scarcely slept a wink the whole of the preceding night, and now, throwing himself on his bed, he fell immediately into a profound sleep.

XXIII

He slept soundly for several hours. Then he dreamed he was fighting a duel again, with Herr Klüber for his opponent, and a parrot perched on a fir-tree, and this parrot was Pantaleone, who kept repeating, his beak clicking: "*Una . . . due . . . tre . . . tre . . . tre . . . tre . . .*"

And then the tre-tre-tre sounded too distinct for a dream; he opened his eyes and raised his head from the pillow . . . someone was knocking at the door.

"Come in!" cried Sanin.

The waiter appeared and told him a lady was very anxious to speak to him.

"Gemma!" flashed through his mind . . . but the lady turned out to be Gemma's mother—Frau Lenore.

As soon as she entered the room, she sank on to a chair and burst into tears.

"What's the matter, dear, good Madame Roselli?" asked Sanin, sitting down beside her and touching her

hand gently and affectionately. "What has happened? Calm yourself, I entreat you!"

"*Ach*, Herr Dimitri, I am very, very unhappy!"

"You are unhappy?"

"*Ach*, very! Who could have expected such a thing? Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue...."

She was breathing heavily.

"But what is it? Explain! Would you like a drink of water?"

"No, thank you." Frau Lenore wiped her eyes with her handkerchief and started crying more violently than ever.

"I know all! All!"

"What d'you mean—all?"

"All that happened today. And the cause of it—I know that too. You acted like a generous man. But what an unfortunate situation! Not for nothing was I against that excursion to Soden ... not for nothing!" (Frau Lenore had not mentioned this on the day of the excursion itself, but now she was convinced that even then she had foreseen "everything.") "And I have come to you, as to a man of honour, a friend, although I have only known you five days.... But I am a widow, you know. Lonely.... My daughter...."

Frau Lenore's voice was choked with tears. Sanin did not know what to think. "Your daughter?" he echoed.

"My daughter—Gemma..." the words came out almost in a groan from behind Frau Lenore's tear-soaked handkerchief, "... told me today that she wouldn't marry Herr Klüber, and that I must tell him so."

• Sanin gave a slight start—he had not expected this.

"I say nothing of the disgrace," continued Frau Lenore, "though who ever heard of a girl rejecting her fiancé? But it will be ruin for us, Herr Dimitri!" Frau Lenore energetically screwed her handkerchief into a tight little ball, as if determined to screw up all her sorrows in it. "We can't live on the income from our shop any

more, Herr Dimitri. And Herr Klüber is very rich and will get richer and richer. And why is he to be rejected? Just because he didn't stand up for his betrothed? Well—it wasn't very nice of him, but after all he's a civilian, he hasn't had a university education, and a respectable tradesman like him can afford to despise the silly pranks of some unknown little officer. And after all was it such a great offence?"

"Excuse me, Frau Lenore, but you seem to be accusing me. . . ."

"I don't accuse you of anything at all. You're quite different—like all Russians, you are a military man. . . ."

"Excuse me, but I'm *not*. . . ."

"You're a foreigner, a visitor, I am grateful to you," went on Frau Lenore, not heeding Sanin's words. She breathed heavily, gesticulated, smoothed out her handkerchief and blew her nose. The manner in which she gave vent to her grief would alone have been enough to show that she was not born beneath northern skies.

"And how can Herr Klüber go on working behind the counter if he is to fight his customers? It's unheard of! And now I am to tell him he's rejected. And what are we to live on? We used to be the only ones who made Angel Cake and *nougat* with pistachio, and we had plenty of customers, but now everyone makes Angel Cake. Just think—apart from all this there'll be enough talk in the town about your duel . . . such a thing can't be hushed up. And suddenly the engagement is to be broken. . . . It's a *skandal*, a *skandal*! Gemma's a fine girl, she loves me dearly, but she's an obstinate Republican, and despises public opinion. You are the only one who could talk her over!"

Sanin was still more astonished. "I, Frau Lenore?"

"Yes, you, and you alone! That's what I came to you for—there was nothing else I could think of. You're so wise, so good. You stood up for her. She will believe

you. She is bound to believe you—you risked your life for her. You can make her see—I have done all I can—that she will ruin herself and all of us. You saved my son, now save my daughter! You have been sent here by God.... I am ready to implore you on my bended knees....”

And Frau Lenore half rose from her chair as if to throw herself at Sanin’s feet.... He restrained her.

“Frau Lenore! For God’s sake! What are you doing?”

She clutched at his hands feverishly. “You promise?”

“Try and think, Frau Lenore—how can I?...”

“You promise? Do you want me to fall down dead this very moment at your feet?”

Sanin did not know how to behave. Never before had he encountered the Italian temperament in action.

“I will do anything you like,” he exclaimed. “I will speak to Fräulein Gemma....”

Frau Lenore uttered a cry of joy.

“But I really don’t know what will come of it....”

“Oh, do not refuse, do not refuse!” implored Frau Lenore. “You have given your word. Something wonderful will come of it, I’m sure. Anyhow, there’s nothing more that *I* can do. She won’t listen to me.”

“Did she tell you positively that she would not marry Herr Klüber?” asked Sanin after a short pause.

“She refuses point-blank. She’s just like her father, Giovan’ Battista. A regular hot-head!”

“A hot-head? Gemma?” repeated Sanin slowly.

“Yes, yes, but she’s an angel, too. She will obey you. Will you come—soon, soon? Oh, my dear Russian friend!” Frau Lenore rose impulsively from her chair and no less impulsively flung her arms round the neck of the seated Sanin. “Accept a mother’s blessing—and give me a drink of water!”

Sanin brought Madame Roselli a glass of water, gave her his word of honour to come immediately, escorted

her down the stairs and out into the street, and returned to his room, where he stood staring before him in utter bewilderment.

"Things have begun to move with a vengeance now!" he said to himself. "And so swiftly that my head is going round." He did not even try to look into his heart, to understand what was going on there. He only knew that all was confusion. "What a day, what a day!" His lips formed the words involuntarily. "A hot-head, is she? Her own mother said so. . . . And I'm to give her advice. . . . Advise *her*! Fine advice for me to give!"

Sanin's head was indeed in a whirl, and above the whole vortex of sensations, impressions, unexpressed thoughts, floated the image of Gemma—that image which had been so indelibly engraved upon his mind on that warm, electrically-charged night, framed in the dark window in the rays of the clustering stars.

XXIV

Sanin approached the house of Madame Roselli with uncertain steps. His heart was beating violently; he could distinctly feel it knocking against his ribs, he could even hear it. What was he to say to Gemma? How was he to speak to her? He entered the house not through the shop, but by the back-door. He met Frau Lenore in the small outer room. She was at once delighted and alarmed to see him.

"I've been waiting for you," she whispered, pressing his hand with each of hers in turn. "Go into the garden—she's there. Mind—I rely on you!"

Sanin went into the garden.

Gemma was seated on a bench beside the path, selecting the ripest cherries from a great basket and putting them on a plate. The sun was low—it was nearly seven—

and there was more crimson than gold in the broad slanting rays it flung all over Madame Roselli's little garden. Every now and then the leaves whispered, gently and almost inaudibly, belated bees flew from blossom to blossom with staccato buzzes, and a turtle-dove cooed monotonously and indefatigably.

Gemma had on the same big hat she had worn during the drive to Soden. She glanced at Sanin from under the bent brim and stooped over the basket once more.

Sanin drew near Gemma, unconsciously making each step shorter than the one before, and . . . and. . . And all he could think of was to ask her why she was picking over the cherries. . . .

Gemma took a little time to answer him.

"Those ones—the ripest—" she brought out at last, "will be used for jam, and these, for tarts. We sell round sugared tarts, you know."

With these words Gemma bent still lower, and her right hand, a double cherry between the fingers, remained suspended between basket and plate.

"May I sit down beside you?"

"You may." Gemma shifted slightly on the bench. Sanin took his place at her side. "How am I to begin?" he asked himself. But Gemma helped him out.

"You fought a duel today," she said eagerly, turning her exquisite face, rosy with confusion, full upon him—and what profound gratitude shone in her eyes! "How calm you are! I suppose danger does not exist for you."

"Oh, come! I was in no danger whatever. Everything went off in the most harmless and innocent manner."

Gemma waved a finger from right to left in front of her eyes—another Italian gesture. . . . "No, no! Don't say that! You won't deceive me! Pantaleone told me everything!"

"And you believed him. Did he compare me with the statue of the Commander?"

"His figures of speech may be ridiculous, but there is nothing ridiculous about his feelings, or about what you did today. And all because of me . . . for my sake. . . . I shall never forget it."

"I assure you, Fräulein Gemma. . . ."

"I shall never forget it," she repeated emphatically, once more looking steadily at him, and turned away.

Now he could see the fine, pure lines of her profile, and he told himself he had never seen anything like it, had never felt anything like what he felt at that moment. His soul was on fire.

"And my promise!" flashed through his mind.

"Fräulein Gemma. . ." he began again after a moment's hesitation.

"Well?"

She did not turn towards him, but went on picking out the ripe cherries, holding them carefully by the stalks with the tips of her fingers and raising the leaves painstakingly. . . . But how much confiding affection there had been in that word "Well?"!

"Didn't your mother tell you anything . . . about—"

"About what?"

"About me."

Gemma suddenly threw back into the basket the cherries she had just taken from it.

"Has she been talking to you?" she asked in her turn.

"Yes."

"And what did she tell you?"

"She told me you . . . you had suddenly decided to change . . . your former intentions."

Gemma again bent her head. She seemed to disappear beneath the brim of her hat; all that could be seen was her neck, flexible and delicate as the stem of some great flower.

"What intentions?"

"Your intentions . . . regarding . . . the future arrangement of your life."

"You mean . . . you are speaking about Herr Klüber?"

"Yes."

"Mamma told you I don't wish to become the wife of Herr Klüber?"

"Yes."

Gemma moved on the bench. The basket tilted and fell . . . a few cherries rolled out on to the path. A minute passed, and another. . . .

"What made her tell you that?" came in Gemma's voice.

Sanin could still see nothing but Gemma's neck. Her breast was rising and falling more rapidly than usual.

"What made her tell me? Your mother thought, since you and I had made friends in such a short time, that you felt a certain confidence in me, and that I might be able to give you good advice—and you would listen to me."

Gemma's hands slid quietly on to her lap . . . and began plucking at the folds of her dress.

"What advice do you give me, Monsieur Dimitri?" she asked after a short pause.

Sanin could see that Gemma's hands were trembling in her lap . . . she was only plucking at her dress to conceal this trembling. He placed his own hand gently on these pale, trembling fingers.

"Gemma," he said, "why don't you look at me?"

With a sudden movement she let her hat fall back and fixed her gaze on him, trustful and grateful as before. She was waiting for him to speak . . . but the sight of her face at once embarrassed and dazzled him. The warm rays of the evening sun gilded her youthful face, and the expression of this face was brighter and more vivid than the sunlight itself.

"I will take your advice, Monsieur Dimitri," she said, smiling ever so slightly and ever so slightly raising her eyebrows. "But what is your advice to me?"

"Advice?" repeated Sanin. "You see, your mother thinks that to refuse Herr Klüber just because he did not display special courage the other day. . . ."

"Just for that?" murmured Gemma, bending down and picking up the basket, which she placed on the bench beside her.

"... and that it would be ... in a general way ... unreasonable on your part to refuse him; that it would be advisable for you to weigh all the consequences before taking such a step and, finally, that the state of your affairs imposes certain obligations on each member of your family. . . ."

"All that is Mamma's opinion," put in Gemma. "Those are her very words. I know all that. But what is *your* opinion?"

"My opinion?" Sanin fell silent. He felt a lump rise in his throat and could hardly breathe. "I, too, consider. . ." he said with an effort.

Gemma drew herself up. "You, too? You?"

"Yes ... I mean. . . ." Sanin could not, actually could not add a single word.

"Good," said Gemma. "If you, as my friend, advise me to alter my decision ... that is to say, not to alter my former decision—I will think it over." Not noticing what she was doing, she began taking the cherries out of the plate and putting them back into the basket. . . . "Mamma hopes I will do what you say. . . . Very good. Perhaps I really will. . . ."

"But, Fräulein Gemma, I should first like to know the reasons impelling you. . . ."

"I will do what you say," said Gemma, and her brows contracted, her cheeks turned pale, and she bit her underlip. "You have done so much for me that I am bound to do what you want. I am bound to fulfil your desire. I will tell Mamma—I will think it over. Ah, here she comes herself!"

Frau Lenore had in fact appeared at the door leading from the house into the garden. Her impatience was too great, she could no longer sit still. She calculated that Sanin must long ago have finished his talk with Gemma, although it had only been going on a quarter of an hour.

"No, no, no, for God's sake, say nothing to her yet, nothing!" implored Sanin hastily, almost as if seized by terror. "Wait . . . I'll tell you, I'll write to you . . . and till then don't come to any decision. . . . Wait!"

He pressed Gemma's hand and jumped up from the bench, rushed past the astonished Frau Lenore, raising his hat and muttering something inarticulate—and disappeared.

Frau Lenore went up to her daughter.

"Kindly tell me, Gemma. . . ."

Gemma suddenly got up and embraced her. "Dear Mamma, could you wait a little longer, ever such a little? Till tomorrow? You will? And let there be not a word said till tomorrow. . . . *Ach!*"

She was suddenly bathed in a flood of bright tears, evidently to her own surprise. What astonished Frau Lenore most of all was that the expression of Gemma's face was not at all sad, if anything, it was joyful.

"What has come over you?" she asked. "You never cry --and all of a sudden. . . ."

"It's nothing, Mamma, nothing. Just wait! We must both wait. Don't ask me anything till tomorrow—and let's pick over the cherries before the sun sets."

"But you will be reasonable, won't you?"

"Oh, I am very reasonable!" Gemma nodded significantly. She began gathering the cherries in small bunches, holding them high over her flushed face. She did not wipe away her tears, they dried on her cheeks.

Sanin returned to his hotel almost at a run. He felt, he was sure, that only there, only when he was alone, would he be able to discover what was going on within him. And so it was—hardly had he got into his room and seated himself at the desk when, planting both his elbows on the top of it and pressing the palms of his hands to his face, he cried out in melancholy, hollow tones: "I love her, I love her madly!" Everything within him burned, like a live coal from which a layer of ashes is suddenly blown. One short moment . . . and he could no longer understand how he could have sat beside her, talked to her, and not felt that he worshipped the very hem of her garment, that he was ready, as young men say, "to die at her feet." That last meeting in the garden had decided all. Now, when he thought of her, it was no longer with dishevelled curls, in the starlight—he only saw her as she had sat on the bench, as she had suddenly thrown back her hat and looked at him so trustfully . . . and the trepidation of love, the thirst for love, coursed through his veins. He remembered the rose which he had been carrying about in his pocket for two days, and took it out and pressed it with such feverish force to his lips that he actually winced with the pain. Now he no longer reasoned, no longer thought, calculated, or looked into the future. He had separated himself from his entire past, had bounded forward. He had broken the moorings attaching him to the dreary bank of his lonely, bachelor existence and plunged into the gay, seething, powerful torrent, caring little, not even asking, where it was bearing him, or whether his frail barque would be dashed against a rock. These were no longer the gentle streams of the Uhland ballad which had so soothed him lately . . . these were powerful, irresistible waves. They sped on, and he with them.

Drawing a sheet of paper towards him, he indited the following lines—without a blot, scarcely raising his pen from the paper:

“Dear Gemma,

“You know the advice I undertook to give you, you know what your mother wishes and what she asked me to do—but what you do not know and what I now feel bound to tell you is that I love you, love you with all the passion of a heart which has never loved before. This flame has blazed up unexpectedly in my heart, but with such power that I cannot find words to describe it. When your mother came to me and asked my help, it was still only smouldering within me, otherwise, as an honest man, I would probably have refused to fulfil the charge she imposed on me. . . . The confession I am now making is in itself the confession of an honest man. It is only right for you to know whom you have to deal with—there must be no misunderstandings between us. You see, I can give you no advice. . . . I love you, love you, love you—there is nothing else either in my mind or in my heart.

“*D. Sanin.*”

Folding up and sealing the note, Sanin at first thought of ringing for the waiter and sending it by him. “No, that wouldn’t do. Ask Emile to take it? But it would be just as awkward to go to the shop, to look for him among the other salesmen. . . . Besides, it’s evening already, he’s probably left the shop.” Thus meditating, Sanin nevertheless put on his hat and went out. He turned one corner, then another, until, to his indescribable joy, he came upon—Emile. A leather pouch under his arm, a paper parcel in his hand, the youthful enthusiast was hastening homewards.

"There really must be something in the saying that every lover has his lucky star," thought Sanin, and called out to Emile.

The boy turned and immediately rushed up to him.

Sanin did not allow him to indulge his emotions, but handed him the note, explaining to whom it must be given and in what manner. . . . Emile listened attentively.

"So that nobody sees?" he asked, his face assuming an important and mysterious expression, as if to say: "You and I understand what it's all about."

"Yes, my friend," said Sanin. He felt somewhat embarrassed, but patted Emile on the cheek. "And if there's any answer . . . you'll bring it to me, won't you? I'll be at home all the time."

"Don't you worry about that," whispered Emile gaily and ran off, looking back over his shoulder and nodding as he ran.

Sanin went back to his room, flung himself on the sofa without lighting the candles, put his hands beneath his head, and surrendered to that sensation of newly-acknowledged love which it is no good trying to describe. Whoever has felt it knows its languid sweetness. And there is no explaining it to anyone who has never felt it.

The door opened and Emile put in his head.

"I've brought it," he said in a whisper "Here it is—the answer."

He held a slip of folded paper high over his head.

Sanin leaped from the sofa and snatched the note from Emile's hand. His passion had mounted so high that he no longer had any thought of concealment, of observing decency—even in front of this boy who was her brother. He would gladly have kept up appearances in front of him, have controlled himself—if he could have.

He went over to the window and read the following lines in the light of a street-lamp just in front of the hotel:

"I beg you, I implore you—*do not come to us all day tomorrow, do not show yourself*. This is necessary to me—absolutely necessary. Afterwards everything will be decided. I know you will not refuse me, because. . . .

"*Gemma.*"

Sanin read the note twice—how sweet, how touchingly beautiful her handwriting seemed to him! Then, after a moment's thought, he turned to Emile, calling him loudly by his name. Emile, who, in his anxiety to show that he was a discreet young man, had been standing face to the wall, picking at it with his finger-nail, immediately rushed up to him.

"What can I do for you?"

"Listen, my friend! Will you—"

"Monsieur Dimitri," Emile interrupted him plaintively. "Why don't you call me *tee**?"

Sanin laughed. "All right. (Emile gave a little jump for joy.) Listen, my friend! Will you tell somebody—you know who I mean—that everything will be exactly as she says?" (Emile compressed his lips and shook his head solemnly.) "...And you ... what are you doing tomorrow?"

"Me? What would you like me to do?"

"Come to me early tomorrow morning if possible and we'll take a walk in the country round Frankfort. Would you like that?"

Emile again jumped for joy. "I should think so! What could be better? To go for a walk with you—why, it's, it's simply a miracle. Of course I'll come."

"And supposing they don't let you off?"

"They will."

"Listen ... don't tell ... you know who ... that I invited you for the whole day."

* *You*, in familiar speech.—*Tr.*

"Why should I? I'll just go, that's all. What does it matter?"

Emile kissed Sanin heartily and ran off.

Sanin paced the room for long and went to bed very late. He yielded once more to piercingly sweet sensations, to pangs half joyful, half fearful, at the thought of the new life before him. Sanin was extremely glad he had thought of inviting Emile for the whole of the next day. He was very like his sister. "He will remind me of her," Sanin told himself.

But one question occupied him almost to the exclusion of all others: how could he have been yesterday quite a different person from what he was today? It seemed to him he had always loved Gemma—and always exactly as he loved her today.

XXVI

The next morning at eight o'clock Emile, holding Tartaglia on a leash, appeared at the door of Sanin's room. He could not have been more punctual if his parents had been German. He had lied to them at home, saying that he was going for a walk with Sanin before breakfast, and would go straight to the shop afterwards. While Sanin was dressing, Emile spoke to him, rather timidly to be sure, about Gemma, about her quarrel with Herr Klüber; but Sanin maintained a stern silence, and Emile, trying to look as if he understood why not the slightest reference must be made to this important point, relinquished it himself, only assuming, every now and then, an absorbed, even severe expression.

After drinking their coffee, the friends set off—on foot, of course—for Hauzen, a little village situated not far from Frankfort, and surrounded by forests. The entire range of the Taunus Mountains could be seen from here.

It was a splendid day, the sun shone, warming them without scorching them; a fresh breeze rustled cheerily in the green leaves; billowy clouds, high up in the sky, cast small shadows, which slipped smoothly and rapidly over the earth. The young men soon left the town behind them and strode briskly and gaily over the smooth, well-kept road. They went into a wood where they wandered for some time; then they made a hearty meal in a country tavern; after this they climbed a mountain, admired the view, and sent stones rolling down the slope, clapping their hands delightedly at their funny rabbit-like bounds, until an invisible passer-by-below cursed them in a powerful ringing voice. Then they lay down on the short, dry, purple-yellow moss. Then they went to another tavern for beer, after which they ran races and vied with one another in long-jumping. They discovered an echo and discoursed with it, singing and hooting; they wrestled, broke off twigs, adorned their hats with ferns—and even danced: Tartaglia, inasmuch as he was able, took part in all these occupations. True, he did not cast any stones, but he rolled tumbling after them, whined when the young men sang, and even drank beer, though with obvious disgust—he had been taught this art by a student to whom he had once belonged. He was not nearly so obedient to Emile as he was to Pantaleone, his master—and when Emile bade him “speak” or “sneeze,” he only wagged his tail, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, curled inwards at the edges.

The two young men found plenty to talk about. At the beginning of the walk, Sanin, as the elder and therefore more rational, broached the subject of *fatum*, or predestination, and the significance and nature of man's vocation, and what constituted it, but the conversation very soon took a less serious turn. Emile began asking his friend and patron about Russia, and how duels were fought there, and whether the women were good-looking,

and if it would take a long time to learn Russian, and what he had felt when the officer took aim at him. And Sanin, in his turn, asked Emile about his father, his mother, and his family affairs as a whole, trying hard not to mention Gemma by name—and thinking of nothing but her. Truth to tell, it was not exactly of her that he thought, but of the next day, of that mysterious morrow which was to bring him such unprecedented, such marvellous happiness. A screen of thin, light material, fluttering slightly every now and then, seemed to have been drawn across his mental vision—and on the other side of this veil he felt there was . . . a young face, motionless, angelic, with a tender smile on its lips and eye-lashes lowered in feigned severity. And this face was not the face of Gemma, it was the face of happiness itself. And at last *his* hour had come, the screen fluttered up, the lips opened, the lashes were raised—the divinity saw him—and now all was a radiance as of the sun, infinite joy and ecstasy! When he thought about this hour, this morrow, his heart seemed to miss a beat for very joy, for the yearning thrill of ever-growing anticipation.

And this anticipation, these longings, did not interfere with anything. They accompanied his every movement—and were never in the way. They did not prevent him from making a splendid dinner in yet another tavern with Emile, and it was only every now and then that the idea crossed his mind like a flash of lightning—if people only knew! His longings did not prevent him from playing leap-frog with Emile after dinner. The game was played on an expansive green lawn . . . and what was Sanin's consternation and confusion when, just as he was spreading his legs nimbly and soaring like a bird over Emile's bent back, to the accompaniment of Tartaglia's shrill barking, he caught sight on the edge of the lawn of two officers, in whom he instantly recognized his opponent of yesterday and his second—Herr von Dön-

hof and Herr von Richter. Each had thrust a monocle in one eye and was looking on, grinning.... Sanin alighted on his feet, turned, hurriedly put on the coat he had discarded, and uttered a brief word of command to Emile; the latter put on his coat, too, and they both walked rapidly away.

They got back to Frankfort late.

"They'll scold me," said Emile, taking leave of Sanin. "But I don't care. I've had a lovely, lovely day."

When he got back to the hotel, Sanin found a note from Gemma awaiting him. She appointed a meeting for the next day, at seven in the morning, in one of the public parks with which Frankfort is surrounded on all sides.

How his heart leaped! How glad he was that he had obeyed her so implicitly! Oh, God, what did this incredible, unique, impossible, and inevitable morrow promise—what did it not promise!

He probed Gemma's note with his eyes. The long, elegant tail of the letter "G," her initial, at the bottom of the sheet, reminded him of her beautiful fingers, of her hand.... He remembered that he had never touched this hand with his lips.... "Italian women," he meditated, "contrary to what is said of them, are modest and strict.... Gemma, especially. She is a queen, a goddess... as pure and virginal as marble...."

But the time will come, the not so distant time....

There was one happy man in Frankfort that night.... He slept, but he could have said of himself, in the words of the poet:

I sleep ... but my watchful heart sleeps not....

It fluttered as lightly as the wing of a moth resting on a flower beneath the rays of the summer sun.

Sanin waked up at five o'clock, was dressed by six, and by half past six was walking up and down the park, in sight of a small summer-house referred to by Gemma in her note.

It was a still, warm, grey morning. Every now and then it seemed as if it was just going to rain; but an extended palm felt no moisture, and only close inspection of one's coat-sleeve brought to light traces of tiny bead-like drops; and even these soon stopped falling. One would have said that there had never been such a thing as wind in the world. Sound did not travel, but remained suspended in the air; in the distance could be made out a whitish mist, and the air was permeated with the fragrance of mignonette and the blossoms of white acacia.

The shops were still closed, but pedestrians were beginning to appear on the pavements. Every now and then the wheels of a solitary carriage could be heard on the road . . . there were no strollers in the park. A gardener was unhurriedly scraping the path with his spade, and a decrepit old dame in a black cloth cloak hobbled down an avenue. Sanin could not possibly for a moment have taken this wretched being for Gemma, and yet his heart gave a jump, and he followed the black spot out of sight with his eyes.

Seven, boomed out the clock on the church-tower.

Sanin came to a halt. Could it be that she was not coming? A cold shudder passed over all his limbs. The same shudder was repeated a moment later—but from quite a different cause—Sanin heard light steps at his back, the light rustle of a woman's dress . . . he turned—it was she.

Gemma followed him along the path. She wore a grey cloak and a small dark hat. She glanced up at him,

turned her head aside, and when she got up to him, stepped rapidly past.

"Gemma!" he called in scarcely audible tones.

She gave a slight nod and continued to walk on. He followed her. His breath came in short gasps, and his legs obeyed him with difficulty.

Gemma passed the summer-house, turned to the right, passed a small, shallow fountain, in which a solitary sparrow was busily splashing, stepped behind a group of tall lilac-bushes, and sank on to a bench. It was a cosy, hidden nook. Sanin sat down beside her.

A minute passed and neither spoke. She did not even look at him, and he looked, not into her face, but at her hands, which were folded over a little umbrella. What was there to say? What words could be so significant as the very fact of their presence here together, alone, so early, so close to one another?

"Are you ... angry with me?" brought out Sanin at last.

He could hardly have said anything more foolish, and he was well aware of this ... but at least the silence was broken.

"Angry with you?" she repeated. "What for? No."

"And do you believe me?" he went on.

"What you said in your letter, you mean?"

"Yes."

Gemma bent her head and said nothing. The umbrella slipped out of her hands. She picked it up hastily before it had time to fall on to the path.

"Oh, believe me! Believe what I wrote you!" exclaimed Sanin. All his timidity had suddenly vanished and he spoke with fervour. "If there is such a thing as truth in the world, sacred, irrefutable truth—it is that I love you, love you passionately, Gemma!"

She cast a momentary oblique glance at him and almost dropped the umbrella again.

"Believe me, believe me!" he implored, stretching his arms out towards her, but not daring to touch her, "How can I convince you?"

She glanced at him again.

"Tell me, Monsieur Dimitri," she said. "The other day when you came to persuade me—you still didn't know . . . you didn't feel. . . ."

"I felt," retorted Sanin eagerly, "but I did not know. I have loved you from the very first moment I set eyes on you, but I did not realize at once what you had become for me. Besides, I heard you were engaged. . . . As for your mother's request to me, in the first place, how could I have refused her? And in the second place, it seems to me I fulfilled it in a manner that might have led you to guess. . . ."

Heavy steps were heard, and a thickset gentleman with a carpet-bag on one shoulder, probably a foreigner, appeared from behind the lilacs, cast a glance at the couple on the bench with the impertinence of a traveller, coughed loudly, and proceeded on his way.

"Your mother," said Sanin, as soon as the sound of the heavy footfalls died away, "told me that your refusal would cause scandal" (Gemma frowned almost imperceptibly), "that I had to a certain extent given grounds for unpleasant talk by my action, and that . . . consequently . . . I was . . . under some sort of obligation to persuade you not to refuse your fiancé, Herr Klüber."

"Monsieur Dimitri," said Gemma, passing her hand over her hair at the side next to Sanin, "kindly stop calling Herr Klüber my fiancé. I shall never be his wife. I have refused him."

"Refused him? When?"

"Yesterday."

"To his face?"

"To his face. In our house. He came to see us."

"Gemma! Does it mean you love me?"

She turned to him.

"Would I have come here if I didn't?" she whispered, letting her hands drop to the bench.

Sanin seized these helpless hands, lying palm upwards on the bench, and held them against his eyes, his lips. . . . And now the screen which had fluttered before him yesterday was removed. There it was, happiness, this was its radiant countenance!

He raised his head to look at Gemma, with a direct, bold gaze. She returned his gaze, looking slightly down at him. From beneath lowered eyelids her eyes gleamed through a veil of blissful tears. And that was not just a smile on her face, it was a laugh, a blissful, inaudible laugh.

He made as if to press her to his breast, but she drew back, still laughing soundlessly, and shook her head at him. "Wait!" her blissful eyes seemed to say.

"Oh, Gemma!" cried Sanin. "Could I ever have thought that thou" (his heart shook like a harp-string when the word "thou" passed his lips for the first time) "wouldst come to love me?"

"I never expected it myself," said Gemma softly.

"Could I ever have thought," continued Sanin, "that in coming to Frankfort, where I intended to stay no more than an hour or two, I should find the happiness of my whole life?"

"Your whole life? Really and truly?" asked Gemma.

"My whole life, for ever and ever!" exclaimed Sanin in fresh transports.

The gardener's spade suddenly scraped away, two paces from the bench on which they were sitting.

"Let's go home," whispered Gemma. "Together—do you want to?"

If she had said to him at that moment: "Throw yourself into the sea—do you want to?" she would hardly

have had time to finish the sentence before he would have sprung into the deep.

Together they went out of the park and turned their steps homewards, avoiding the town and choosing the quiet streets of the suburb.

XXVIII

Sanin walked by Gemma's side, every now and then falling a few steps behind, never taking his eyes off her, and smiling all the time. And though she seemed to be in a hurry, she kept stopping abruptly. Truth to tell, they both, he pale, she rosy with emotion, moved onwards as in a dream. The surrender—a few moments before—of their souls to one another had been so overwhelming, so new, so terrifying; their whole lives had been altered and transformed so suddenly that neither of them had quite recovered, and all they knew was that they had been caught up in a whirlwind like the nocturnal blast which had almost thrown them into one another's arms. Walking on, Sanin even felt as if he were seeing Gemma in a different light. In a single moment he noted certain peculiarities in her gait, in her movements, and, dear God, how infinitely lovable and sweet they were! And she, too, felt that he was looking at her *differently*.

They were both in love for the first time; all the miracles of first love were being performed within them. First love is like a revolution. The monotonous regular course of everyday life is broken and destroyed in a single moment, youth is at the barricades, its bright banner fluttering high above them, ready to greet whatever is in store—death or a new life—with enthusiastic welcome.

"Who's that? Can it be our old man?" exclaimed Sanin, pointing to a muffled figure hurrying past them as if endeavouring to remain unnoticed. In his superabundance

of joy he felt a need to speak to Gemma not of love—that was all settled, that was sacred—but of something quite different.

“Yes, it’s Pantaleone,” replied Gemma gaily and joyfully. “He probably followed me out of the house; he followed on my heels all day yesterday . . . he guesses.”

“He guesses!” echoed Sanin delightedly. What was there that Gemma could say that would not have delighted him?

He then asked her to give him a detailed account of the events of the previous day.

She immediately embarked upon a hurried, confused narrative, interspersed with smiles, and brief sighs, and the exchange of quick radiant glances with Sanin. She told him how, after the conversation of the day before yesterday, her mother had kept trying to get something definite out of her, how she had kept Frau Lenore at bay by promising to tell her her decision in a day’s time, how she had managed to insist on this postponement, and how hard it had been, how Herr Klüber had appeared quite unexpectedly, more correct and starchy than ever, how he had declared his indignation at the unpardonably puerile behaviour of the Russian stranger—“he meant thy duel—so profoundly insulting to him, Herr Klüber (those were his very words), and demanded that *thou* be refused entry to the house. ‘Because,’ he added,” and here Gemma mimicked his voice and manner subtly, “‘this casts a slur on my honour, making it look as if I were unable to stand up for my own fiancée, should I consider this necessary or advantageous. The whole of Frankfort will know tomorrow that a stranger fought an officer for the sake of my fiancée—whoever heard of such a thing! It is a slur on my honour!’ And fancy, Mamma agreed with him, but I told him at once that he need not worry about his honour and his person, he need not feel insulted by talk about his fiancée, because I wasn’t his fiancée any more,

and would never be his wife. I must admit I would like to have spoken to you before finally breaking off with him. But he came . . . and I could not help myself. Mamma simply screamed with terror, but I went into the next room and brought him back his ring—you didn't notice, I took it off my finger two days ago—and gave it to him. He was terribly offended, but since he is ever so vain and conceited, he didn't say much, and just went away. Of course I had to bear a lot from Mamma, and it hurt me dreadfully to see how she suffered, and I even thought I had been in too much of a hurry. But you see, I had your note, and I knew, even before. . . ."

"That I loved you," interpolated Sanin hastily.

"Yes, that you loved me."

Gemma chattered on, losing the thread of her narrative, smiling, lowering her voice, or, whenever anyone approached or passed by, coming suddenly to a stop. And Sanin listened in ecstasy, enjoying the sound of her voice, just as, the day before, he had admired her handwriting.

"Mamma's terribly upset," went on Gemma, her words tumbling out helter-skelter. "She simply can't get it into her head that I detest Herr Klüber, that I got engaged to him, not for love, but because she kept on and on begging me to. . . . She suspects . . . you . . . thee . . . to be frank, she is sure I am in love with thee, and what makes it still worse for her is that such an idea never entered her head the other day, and she actually asked you to persuade me. . . . Rather a queer request, wasn't it? Now she calls you a cunning conniver, and says you have abused her confidence, and warns me that you will deceive me, too. . . ."

"But, Gemma," cried Sanin, "didn't you tell her. . . ."

"I didn't tell her anything. What right had I, before speaking to you?"

Sanin flung out his arms.

"I hope, Gemma, that now, at least, you will tell her

all, and lead me to her. . . . I want to prove to your mother that I am no deceiver."

And Sanin's breast heaved from the upsurge of generous, ardent emotions within him.

Gemma gazed at him with wide-open eyes. "D'you mean to say you want to go with me to Mamma now? To Mamma, who declares that . . . that there can be nothing between us—that it will all come to nothing?" There was a word which Gemma could not bring herself to pronounce . . . it seemed to burn her lips, but Sanin, knowing this, had the greater pleasure in uttering it himself.

"To marry you, Gemma—to be your husband—I can imagine no greater bliss."

There were no longer any limits to his love, his generosity, his determination.

When he said this, Gemma, who had stood still for a moment, walked on even faster than before. . . . She seemed to want to run away from this great, this unexpected happiness, as if it were too much.

But all of a sudden her knees trembled. From round the next corner, only a few paces away, in a new hat and new coat, straight as an arrow, curled like a poodle, appeared Herr Klüber. Catching sight, first of Gemma, and then of Sanin, he seemed to utter an inward snort and bend his graceful figure backwards, as he came jauntily towards them. Sanin was taken aback for a moment, but glancing at the face of Klüber, to which its possessor did his utmost to give an expression of scornful surprise and even pity—glancing at this rosy, commonplace visage, Sanin suddenly felt a wave of anger sweep over him, and strode ahead.

Gemma took him by the arm, putting her hand through it with calm determination, and looked straight into the face of her former fiancé. . . . The latter narrowed his eyes, seemed to shrink into himself, and stepped aside,

muttering through his teeth—"The usual end of the song" (*Das alte Ende vom Liedel!*), then passed on with the same jaunty, slightly springy gait.

"What did the scoundrel say?" asked Sanin, ready to rush after Klüber. But Gemma held him back and made him go on, her arm still in his.

The Roselli shop showed in the distance. Gemma again came to a stop.

"Dimitri, Monsieur Dimitri," she said, "we haven't gone in yet, we haven't seen Mamma yet . . . if you still want time for thinking things over, if . . . you are still free, Dimitri."

For all reply, Sanin pressed her hand hard against his chest and pulled her forward.

"Mamma," said Gemma, going with Sanin into the room where Frau Lenore sat, "I have brought you the real one."

XXIX

If Gemma had announced that she had brought her mother cholera, or death itself, Frau Lenore could scarcely have received the news with greater despair. She sat down at once in a corner—her face to the wall—and burst into tears, she positively wailed, exactly like a Russian peasant woman at the coffin of her husband or son. For a moment Gemma was so overcome that she did not even go up to her mother, but stood stock-still in the middle of the room. As for Sanin, he quite lost his head and was ready to cry himself. The inconsolable weeping went on for an hour—a whole hour! Pantaleone decided it would be best to lock the street-door of the shop, so as no stranger should enter—fortunately it was still very early. The old man himself was astounded—he could not approve of the haste which Gemma and Sanin had displayed, while unable to find it in his heart to criticize them and

quite ready to afford them his protection—should they need it—so greatly did he dislike Klüber. Emile regarded himself as the go-between of his friend and his sister and was inclined to be proud that everything had gone off so well. He simply could not understand why Frau Lenore was taking it so hard, and came to the instantaneous conclusion that women were irrational beings at the best. Sanin came off worst of all. Frau Lenore raised a wail, warding him off with her hands whenever he came near her, and it was in vain that he several times cried loudly from a respectful distance: "I want to ask you for the hand of your daughter." Frau Lenore's greatest annoyance was with herself—how could she have been so blind as to see nothing? "If my Giovan' Battista were alive," she declared through her tears, "all this would never have happened." "In God's name, what's the matter?" Sanin asked himself. "After all, it's simply absurd!" He dared not look at Gemma, who could not bring herself to raise her eyes to his face, either. She contented herself with patiently tending her mother, who had at first pushed her away, too. . . .

At last, little by little, the tempest abated. Frau Lenore stopped crying and allowed Gemma to lead her from the corner where she was huddled up, seat her in an arm-chair near the window, and give her sips of water flavoured with *fleur d'orange*. She allowed Sanin—not to approach her, not that—but at least to remain in the room (at first she had kept on demanding his instant departure), and did not interrupt him when he spoke. Sanin was quick to take advantage of the lull for a display of remarkable eloquence. It is doubtful if he would have been able to expound his intentions and his feelings before Gemma herself with such ardent conviction. The emotions were of the truest, and the intentions of the purest, like those of Almaviva in the *Barber of Seville*. He concealed neither from Frau Lenore nor from himself the

disadvantages of his intentions, indeed the disadvantages themselves were merely apparent. True, he was a foreigner, and they had only recently made his acquaintance and knew nothing definite either about himself or his means, but he was ready to produce plenty of evidence proving him to be a respectable man and no beggar. He could obtain incontrovertible confirmation of this from his fellow-countrymen. He hoped Gemma would be happy with him and that he would be able to sweeten for her the separation from her family. The mention of separation, the very word "separation," came nigh to ruining everything. Frau Lenore trembled all over, tossing about in her chair. Sanin hastened to add that the separation would be only temporary and that perhaps, after all, there would be no need for it.

Sanin's eloquence did not fall on deaf ears. Frau Lenore began to look at him, if still with grief and reproach, at least without the former loathing and wrath. Then she allowed him to come nearer and even to sit down beside her (Gemma was sitting at her other side). Then she began to reproach him, not with her eyes alone, but in words, which in itself signified a certain softening of her heart. She began complaining, but her complaints grew ever softer and milder and were alternated with questions, now to her daughter, now to Sanin. Then she allowed him to take her hand and did not immediately withdraw it . . . then she shed some more tears, but they were quite different ones. . . . Then she smiled sadly and regretted that Giovan' Battista was not among them, but in quite a different sense from before. . . . Another moment passed, and the two sinners—Sanin and Gemma—were on their knees at her feet, while she laid her hands on their heads in turns. Another moment, and they were both embracing and kissing her, and Emile, his face beaming with joy, ran into the room and hastened to make one of the close-knit group.

Pantaleone peeped into the room, smiled and frowned at one and the same time, and went into the shop to open the street-door.

XXX

Frau Lenore's transition from despair to melancholy and from melancholy to quiet resignation, was accomplished swiftly enough. And the quiet resignation itself was not slow in becoming secret satisfaction, which was, however, concealed and restrained to the utmost for the sake of propriety. Frau Lenore had taken to Sanin from the very first day of their acquaintance. When she had accustomed herself to the idea of his being her son-in-law, she no longer found anything particularly disagreeable in it though she considered it her duty to maintain a somewhat injured, or rather anxious, expression on her face a little longer. And then all the occurrences of the last few days had been so very remarkable . . . one on the top of another. As a practical woman and a mother, Frau Lenore considered it her duty to put all sorts of questions to Sanin. And Sanin, who, setting off in the morning to meet Gemma, had had no thought of marrying her, had not thought at all, but simply yielded to the magical power of passion, now entered with the utmost readiness, with enthusiasm it might be said, into the role of a suitor, answering all questions readily and in full detail. Having satisfied herself that he was a real member of the nobility, and even shown some surprise that he was not a prince, Frau Lenore looked very grave and warned him in advance that she would be quite frank with him, her sacred duty as a mother compelled her to be, to which Sanin replied that he expected nothing else of her and would beg her not to spare him.

Frau Lenore then remarked that Herr Klüber (she pronounced his name with a slight sigh, compressing her

lips, and hesitating for a moment), Herr Klüber, Gemma's former betrothed, already commanded an income of eight thousand guilders, which sum would rapidly increase from year to year, and she would like to know what Sanin's income was.

"Eight thousand guilders," drawled Sanin. "That's about fifteen thousand rubles in our money. . . . My income is a great deal less. I have a small estate in the Tula Gubernia. With good management it could be made to yield, and is bound to yield, five or six thousand. . . . While if I were to take some government post, I could easily get a salary of two thousand."

"A post in Russia!" exclaimed Frau Lenore. "That means I should have to part with Gemma."

"I could get a post in the diplomatic service," struck in Sanin. "I have a few connections . . . and that would mean living abroad. Or I'll tell you what I could do, and that would be the best of all—I could sell my estate and put the purchase-money into some profitable enterprise—into improving your confectioner's business, for example." Sanin himself knew he was talking nonsense, but a strange recklessness had taken possession of him. He looked at Gemma, who, as soon as the conversation turned practical, had begun alternately pacing up and down the room and sitting down, he looked at her, and obstacles no longer existed for him, he was ready to arrange everything, this moment, in the best possible way—anything to prevent her from worrying.

"Herr Klüber wanted to give me a small sum for building up the business, too," said Frau Lenore after a moment of hesitation.

"Mamma! For God's sake, Mamma!" cried Gemma in Italian.

"These things must be discussed in good time, my daughter," replied Frau Lenore in the same language.

She turned to Sanin again and began asking him how

the law stood as to marriage in Russia and if there were no obstacles to marrying a Catholic, as there were in Prussia. (At that time, in the year 1840, the whole of Germany still remembered the quarrel between the Prussian government and the Archbishop of Cologne on the question of mixed marriages.) When Frau Lenore learned, however, that in marrying a Russian noble her daughter would herself be received into the nobility, she expressed a certain satisfaction. "But you'd have to go back to Russia first, wouldn't you?"

"What for?"

"Why—to get permission from your Emperor?"

Sanin explained to her that this was not in the least necessary . . . but that, perhaps, he really would have to pay a flying visit to Russia before the wedding (when he said these words his heart contracted painfully, and Gemma, looking at him, understood the pain at his heart, and blushed and fell pensive)—and that he would try to make use of his sojourn in his native land to sell his estate . . . in any case, he would bring back the necessary funds. . . .

"I wonder if you could bring me some nice Astrakhan fur for a cloak, too?" said Frau Lenore. "They say it's marvellously beautiful and marvellously cheap there."

Certainly, with the greatest pleasure, I'll bring some for Gemma, too!" cried Sanin.

"And me a morocco-leather cap embroidered in silver," put in Emile, thrusting his head into the room.

"All right, I will, and slippers for Pantaleone."

"Enough of these trifles," said Frau Lenore. "We're talking about serious things now. But another thing," added the practical lady, "you say you will sell your estate. Won't you have to sell your peasants, too?"

Sanin felt a sharp pang at his heart. He remembered that, when discussing with Madame Roselli and her daughter the serf system, which, in his own words,

aroused in him profound indignation, he had repeatedly assured them that nothing would ever induce him to sell his peasants, for he regarded such transactions as immoral.

"I will try to sell my estate to somebody I think well of," he said in faltering tones. "Or perhaps the peasants will wish to buy their freedom themselves."

"That would be best of all," agreed Frau Lenore. "After all, to sell living human beings...."

"*Barbari!*" growled Pantaleone, who appeared for a moment in the doorway, behind Emile, and vanished immediately with a toss of his toupee.

"I don't like this," Sanin said to himself and stole a glance at Gemma. She seemed not to have heard his last words. "Well, never mind!" he thought.

The practical conversation went on in this way almost up to dinner-time. Towards the end, Frau Lenore became quite tame, calling him Dimitri, shaking an admonitory finger at him affectionately, and threatening to take her revenge for his perfidy. She subjected him to a long and detailed catechism on his family, for that was "also very important," and insisted on his describing the wedding ceremony to her as solemnized in the Russian church—falling into ecstasies over the prospect of Gemma in a white robe with a golden crown on her head.

"For she is as beautiful as a queen," she said with maternal pride. "Indeed, there is not a queen in the world like her."

"There is not another Gemma in the world!" cried Sanin.

"Yes—that's why she's called Gemma!" (*Gemma* is the Italian for gem.)

Gemma fell to kissing her mother.... It seemed as if only now she was able to breathe freely, as if a heavy burden had been lifted from her shoulders.

And Sanin suddenly felt an overwhelming happiness, a childish gaiety at the thought that the dreams he had so recently indulged in in these very rooms were coming true, actually coming true. He was so brimming over with elation that he felt he must go straight into the shop; he was determined to take his stand behind the counter as he had a few days before. . . . "I have a perfect right to do so, you see! I'm quite one of the family now."

And he really did stand behind the counter, and really did serve customers, that is to say, he sold a pound of sweets to two little girls, or rather gave them two whole pounds, charging them only half the price of one.

At dinner he took his place beside Gemma as her recognized fiancé. Frau Lenore still pursued her practical considerations. Emile laughed a great deal and kept pestering Sanin to take him to Russia when he went. It was decided that Sanin was to leave in a fortnight. Pantaleone alone showed a somewhat gloomy countenance, for which he was teased by Frau Lenore: "And you were his second!" Pantaleone scowled.

Gemma hardly spoke the whole time, but her face had never been so beautiful and so bright. After dinner she called Sanin to go with her for a moment into the garden and said, halting at the bench where she had sat picking over the cherries two days before: "Don't be angry with me, Dimitri, but I want to tell you once more that you are not to consider yourself bound. . . ."

He did not allow her to finish the sentence.

Gemma turned her face away.

"And as for what Mamma said, you know, about different religions—look!"

She seized the garnet cross hanging round her neck on a slender cord, and tugging at it so hard that the cord broke, she handed him the cross.

"If I am yours, then your faith is my faith."

Sanin's eyes were moist when he and Gemma went back to the house.

By the evening everything was back in the familiar channels. They even played *tresette*.

XXXI

Sanin waked up very early the next morning. He was on the summit of human happiness, but it was not this that had interfered with his slumbers. The question, the vital, fatal question—how to sell his estate as promptly and advantageously as possible—disturbed his peace of mind. All sorts of plans jostled one another in his head, but so far nothing had been solved. He went out to get some air and refresh his mind. He firmly intended to appear before Gemma with a finished plan.

What was that figure just ahead, heavy, thick-limbed, but well-dressed, swaying slightly as it hobbled along? Where had he seen that nape, surrounded by tufts of flaxen hair, that head, which seemed to grow straight out of the shoulders, that soft, fat back, those chubby pendant hands? Could it be Polozov, his old school-mate, whom he had lost sight of for the last five years? Sanin overtook the figure walking ahead of him and looked back. . . . A broad yellowish countenance, small piggy eyes with fair lashes and brows, a short, flat nose, thick lips which seemed glued together, a round, hairless chin—and that expression of the whole face—peevish, lazy, mistrustful—why, yes, it was he, Ippolit Polozov!

"My lucky star again?" flashed through Sanin's mind.

"Polozov! Ippolit Sidorych! Is it you?"

The figure came to a halt, the tiny eyes were raised, there was a moment's pause, the lips at last came unstuck, and a voice piped out in a husky falsetto:

"Dmitri Sanin?"

"His very self!" cried Sanin and pressed one of Polozov's hands—which, encased in grey kid gloves, hung as lifelessly as before at his chubby sides. "Have you been here long? Where did you come from? Where are you staying?"

"I came from Wiesbaden yesterday," replied Polozov in leisurely tones. "I'm doing some shopping for my wife and am going back to Wiesbaden today."

"Oh, yes! You're married! And to a regular beauty, they say."

Polozov turned away his eyes. "Yes, so they say."

Sanin laughed. "I see you're the same impassive fellow that you were at school."

"And why should I have changed?"

"They say, too," said Sanin, emphasizing the word "say," "that your wife is very rich."

"They say that, too."

"And don't you know it yourself, Ippolit Sidorych?"

"You see, old man—Dmitri, er . . . Pavlovich, yes, Pavlovich—I don't interfere in my wife's affairs."

"Don't you? Not in any of them?"

Polozov looked aside again. "Not in any of them, old man. . . . She goes her own way, and so I go my own way, too."

"Where are you going now?" asked Sanin.

"I'm not going anywhere now. I'm standing in the street, talking to you. When we've finished talking, I shall go back to my hotel and have breakfast."

"Shall I keep you company?"

"D'you mean—at breakfast?"

"Yes."

"Come, by all means—it's much nicer eating together. You're not a chatterbox, are you?"

"I don't think so."

"Come on, then."

Polozov moved on and Sanin walked beside him. Sanin asked himself—Polozov's lips were again sealed, and he only wheezed and swayed—how a blockhead like that had managed to hook a rich and beautiful wife. He was neither rich, distinguished nor clever himself. At school he had been considered a stupid, languid boy, a sleepy-head and a glutton—his nickname had been "slobbers." Inexplicable!

"And if his wife is really so rich—they say she's the daughter of a contractor of some sort—why shouldn't she buy my estate? He says he has nothing to do with his wife's affairs, but that's impossible! And I'll name a reasonable, tempting price. Why not try? Perhaps all this means my lucky star is in the ascendant. Done! I'll try!"

Polozov led Sanin to one of the best hotels in Frankfurt, in which, needless to say, he had taken the best room. The tables and chairs were piled high with cardboard boxes, wooden cases, bundles. . . . "All purchases for Marya Nikolayevna, old man!" (Marya Nikolayevna was the name of Polozov's wife.) Polozov sank into an arm-chair, loosening his tie and groaning: "This heat!" He then rang for the head-waiter and gave detailed orders for a sumptuous breakfast. "And let my carriage be ready by one! Sharp at one, d'you hear me?"

The head-waiter bowed obsequiously and disappeared with servile celerity.

Polozov unbuttoned his waistcoat. It was obvious, if only from the way he raised his eyebrows, distended his nostrils, and wrinkled up his nose, that talking would be an intolerable burden for him and that he was waiting, not without a certain anxiety, to see if Sanin would compel him to exercise his tongue or would take the onus of carrying on a conversation upon himself.

Sanin understood his friend's mood and refrained from troubling him with questions, confining himself to the necessary minimum. He learned that Polozov had done two

years of military service in the Uhlans (he must have been a sight in the short jacket of the uniform!), had married three years ago and had been abroad more than a year now with his wife, "who is taking some sort of a *kur* in Wiesbaden," and from there intended to go to Paris. Sanin was not more discursive as to his past life and his plans for the future. He went straight to the point, telling him of his intention of selling his estate.

Polozov heard him in silence, glancing from time to time towards the door through which the breakfast was to come. At last breakfast did appear. The head-waiter, accompanied by two underlings, brought in several dishes protected by silver covers.

"Is your estate in the Tula Gubernia?" asked Polozov, seating himself at the table and tucking a napkin into his shirt-collar.

"Yes, it is."

"Yefremov district. I know it."

"You know my Alexeyevka?" asked Sanin, also taking his seat at the table.

"Of course I do." Polozov stuffed a forkful of omelette and truffles into his mouth. "Marya Nikolayevna—my wife—has an estate in the neighbourhood. . . . Waiter, uncork that bottle! The soil's good, but your peasants have cut down all the timber. Why do you want to sell it?"

"I need money, old man. I'd sell it cheap. By the way, why shouldn't you buy it?"

Polozov swallowed a glass of wine, wiped his lips with his napkin, and fell to chewing slowly and noisily again.

"H'm," he said at last. "I don't buy estates—no capital! Pass me the butter. My wife might, of course. You must speak to her. If you don't ask too much, she wouldn't mind. But what asses these Germans are! Don't know how to cook fish! You'd think nothing could be simpler. And yet they keep on prating: 'The *Vaterland* must be united.' Waiter, take this beastly stuff away."

"D'you mean to say your wife manages—everything—herself?" asked Sanin.

"Oh, yes. The cutlets now, *they're* good. Try them. I told you, Dmitri Pavlovich, I don't interfere in any of my wife's affairs, and I tell you again."

Polozov went on chewing loudly.

"H'm. . . . But how am I to speak to her, Ippolit Sidorych?"

"Nothing could be simpler, Dmitri Pavlovich. Go to Wiesbaden. It's not far from here. Waiter, isn't there any English mustard? There isn't? Brutes! Only don't waste any time. We're leaving the day after tomorrow. Let me pour you out a glass—this wine has a bouquet, it's not vinegar."

Polozov's face had become flushed and animated; it only brightened up when he ate . . . or drank.

"I really don't know what to do," muttered Sanin.

"Are you in such a hurry to sell?"

"That's just it, old man, I am!"

"And do you need a big sum?"

"I do. I'm . . . how shall I put it? I've taken it into my head—to get married."

Polozov put the wine-glass he had been lifting to his lips, on the table.

"Married!" he said huskily, in a voice thick with astonishment, and he folded his chubby hands over his stomach. "All of a sudden?"

"Yes . . . very soon."

"Your betrothed is in Russia, of course?"

"No, she's not in Russia."

"Where is she then?"

"Here, in Frankfort."

"And who is she?"

"She's a German, that is to say, she's really an Italian. She's a resident of Frankfort."

"Has she any capital?"

"None at all."

"Then your love must be very intense."

"Funny chap! Of course it is."

"And that's what you need money for?"

"Why, yes . . . yes, it is."

Polozov swallowed his wine, rinsed his mouth, dipped the tips of his fingers into water, dried them carefully on his napkin, and found a cigar and lit it. Sanin watched him in silence.

"There's no other way," bleated Polozov, throwing back his head and emitting a thin stream of smoke. "Go and see my wife. She can settle all your troubles for you if she chooses."

"But how am I to see her? You say you are leaving the day after tomorrow."

Polozov closed his eyes.

"I'll tell you what," he said, revolving his cigar between his lips and sighing. "Go home, pack up as quick as you can, and come back here. I'm leaving at one, there's plenty of room in my carriage, I'll take you with me. That would be the best of all. And now I'll take a nap. I always have to sleep after a meal, old man. Nature demands it and I do not resist. And don't you disturb me."

Sanin thought a moment—and suddenly raised his head. His mind was made up.

"Good! I agree—and thank you! I'll be here at half past twelve, and we'll go to Wiesbaden together. I hope your wife won't be angry."

But Polozov was already beginning to snore. Murmuring: "Don't disturb me!" he moved his feet restlessly and was soon sleeping like a child.

Sanin cast a final look at the heavy figure, the head, the neck, the elevated chin, round as an apple, and went out of the hotel, striding hastily in the direction of the Roselli shop. Gemma must be prepared.

He found her in the shop, with her mother. Frau Lenore, bending down, was measuring the space between the windows with a small folding foot-rule. When she saw Sanin, she straightened herself and greeted him cheerfully, but with a shade of embarrassment.

"Ever since you told that to us yesterday," she said, "my head has been full of ideas for improving our shop. I thought we might put two cupboards with plate-glass shelves here. It's all the fashion now, you know. And then. . . ."

"Splendid! Splendid!" interrupted Sanin. "That must all be thought out. . . . But come here, I have something to tell you." He put out an arm to Frau Lenore and to Gemma and conducted them into the back-room. Frau Lenore took fright and let the foot-rule fall out of her hand. Gemma was at first inclined to be frightened, too, but one look at Sanin reassured her. His face, though grave, nevertheless expressed cheerful determination.

He asked them both to sit down, himself remaining standing before them, as, gesticulating and rumpling his hair, he told them about everything: his meeting with Polozov, the proposed visit to Wiesbaden, the possibility of selling his estate. "You can't think how glad I am!" he concluded. "Things have taken a turn which may even make it unnecessary for me to go to Russia. And we can have the wedding a great deal sooner than I expected."

"When do you have to go?" asked Gemma.

"This very day—in an hour's time. My friend has hired a carriage, he will take me with him."

"Will you write to us?"

"Without a moment's delay. As soon as ever I have a talk with that lady, I'll write."

"You say she is very rich—that lady?" remarked the practical Frau Lenore.

"Enormously! Her father was a millionaire, and he left everything to her."

"All to her? Well, that's your luck. But mind you don't sell your estate too cheap. Be firm and prudent. Don't let your feelings run away with you. I understand your desire to become Gemma's husband as soon as possible . . . but caution before all. Remember—the more you get for your estate, the more there will be for the two of you—and for your children."

Gemma turned aside, and Sanin said, with a wave of his hands: "You can trust to my discretion, Frau Lenore. And I have no intention of haggling. I shall name the proper price, and if she accepts it, well and good, if not, she can do what she likes."

"Do you know . . . that lady?" asked Gemma.

"Never set eyes on her."

"And when will you be back?"

"If nothing comes of the whole business—the day after tomorrow. If things go well, I may have to stay on for a day or two. In any case, I shan't waste a single moment. I'm leaving my heart here, you know. But I stand here talking to you, and I have to go back to the hotel before leaving. . . . Give me your hand for luck, Frau Lenore—we always do that in Russia."

"The right or the left?"

"The left, it's nearer the heart. I'll be back the day after tomorrow—*with* my shield, or *on* my shield. Something tells me I shall return victorious. Good-bye, my kind ones, my dear ones!"

He put his arms round Frau Lenore and kissed her, but he asked Gemma to go with him to her room for a moment—he had something very important to tell her. . . . All he really wanted was to say good-bye to her alone. Frau Lenore understood this and did not try to find out what this very important thing was. . . .

Sanin had never before been in Gemma's room. All the

magic of love, its flame, its ecstasy, its sweet alarms, burned up in him and filled his heart when he crossed that sacred threshold. . . . He looked around him with emotion and fell at the feet of the sweet maiden, pressing his face against her waist. . . .

"Are you mine?" she whispered. "You will be back soon?"

"I am yours, I will return," he gasped out.

"I'll be waiting for you, my dear one."

A few minutes later Sanin was racing along the streets to his hotel. He did not notice Pantaleone, who followed him to the door of the shop, in a dishevelled state, shouting something after him, his hand raised high, as if threatening him.

Sanin presented himself to Polozov at precisely a quarter to one. A carriage-and-four was already drawn up in front of the hotel. On seeing Sanin, Polozov merely said: "So you've made up your mind!" put on his hat, overcoat and galoshes, stuffed cotton wool in his ears, despite the warm summer weather, and went out on to the porch. In obedience to his orders, the waiters had deposited his innumerable purchases in the carriage, tucking cushions, pouches and bundles all round the place where Polozov was to sit, set a hamper of provisions at his feet, and fastened a trunk to the box-seat. Polozov paid for these attentions with a lavish hand, and clambered grunting into the carriage, supported from behind with extreme delicacy by the obsequious door-keeper; he squeezed himself into the seat, arranging the various packets comfortably around him, selected a cigar and lit it, only then beckoning to Sanin, as if to say: "You get in, too." Sanin sat down beside him; Polozov instructed the postilion, through the door-keeper, to mind how he drove if he wanted a tip; the steps of the carriage rattled, the door was slammed, the carriage rolled forward.

Nowadays it takes less than an hour to go by train from Frankfort to Wiesbaden; in those times the express-mail covered the distance in three hours. The horses were changed at least five times.

Polozov may have been dozing or merely swaying in his seat, a cigar between his lips. He hardly spoke at all. He never once looked out of the window, picturesque views interested him not at all, and he actually declared that nature was poison to him. Sanin did not talk either; he, too, wasted no time in admiring the view—he had other things to think about. He yielded himself completely to thoughts and memories. At every station Polozov paid precisely what was due, checked the time by his watch and rewarded the postilions, generously, or the reverse, according to their zeal. When half the journey had been traversed he took two oranges out of the hamper, selected the best for himself, and offered Sanin the other. Sanin took a good look at his companion and burst out laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Polozov, carefully peeling the orange with his short white finger-nails.

"Me?" replied Sanin. "I'm laughing at this journey of ours."

"What about it?" asked Polozov, popping into his mouth a crescent-shaped section of orange.

"It seems so strange. I must admit that I no more thought about you yesterday than I did about the Emperor of China, and today I am driving beside you to sell my estate to your wife, whom I also know nothing on earth about."

"You never can tell," said Polozov. "Grow a little older and nothing will surprise you. For instance, could you imagine me an orderly officer on horseback? But I *was*

one, and Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich commanded, 'Make him trot, the fat cornet! Faster!'

Sanin scratched the back of his head.

"Ippolit Sidorych, tell me what your wife is like! What sort of disposition has she? I ought to know something about her."

"All very well for him to command me to go at a fast trot," struck in Polozov with unexpected vehemence. "But what about me? So I thought to myself: To hell with rank and epaulettes! I don't want them. Oh—my wife? Well, she's a human being like everyone else. Only don't let her catch you napping, she doesn't like it. The chief thing is to keep on talking . . . to give her something to laugh at. Tell her about your love, that sort of thing . . . but make it amusing, you know."

"Amusing?"

"Why, yes. Didn't you tell me you were in love and wanted to get married? Well, tell her all about it."

Sanin took offence. "What do you find amusing in that?"

Polozov merely rolled his eyes. The juice from the orange trickled down his chin.

"Was it your wife who sent you to Frankfort to buy things?" asked Sanin after a short pause.

"It was."

"And what were those purchases?"

"Toys, don't you know."

"Toys? Have you any children?"

Polozov fairly retreated from Sanin.

"What? Why should I have any children? Feminine fripperies—trifles—finery, don't you know!"

"And do you understand that sort of thing?"

"I do."

"But didn't you tell me you had nothing to do with your wife's affairs?"

"I meant her other affairs. This sort of thing is all right. I look after it for want of something better to do. And my wife trusts my taste. And I'm a dab at a bargain."

Polozov's speech was becoming jerky. He was tired.

"And is your wife very rich?"

"She's rich, all right. But she mostly keeps her money to herself."

"As far as I can see you can't complain, however."

"I'm her husband, aren't I? Why should I neglect my opportunities? Besides, I'm very useful to her. I'm quite a treasure. I'm a most convenient husband."

Polozov wiped his face with a silk handkerchief and snorted violently. "Take pity on me!" he seemed to beg. "Don't make me say another word! You see how hard it is for me!"

Sanin left him in peace and plunged once more into meditation.

The Wiesbaden hotel in front of which the carriage drew up was little short of a palace. Bells sounded immediately far within it, and a great bustling and scurrying began. Respectable-looking individuals in black tail-coats hovered about the main entrance. A porter blazing with gold braid opened the door of the carriage with a flourish.

Polozov alighted like a conquering hero and began ascending a fragrant, carpeted staircase. An individual, equally well-dressed but with a Russian type of countenance, rushed to meet him—this was his valet. Polozov informed him that in future he would always take him with him, for the day before, in Frankfort, he had actually been left without warm water for the night. The face of the valet expressed horror and he bent down eagerly to remove his master's galoshes.

"Is Marya Nikolayevna at home?" asked Polozov.

"Yes, sir. Madame is dressing. She is going to dinner with Countess Lasunskaya."

"Oh—her! Wait a minute. There are some things in the carriage, take them all out yourself and bring them up. And you, Dmitri Pavlovich," he added, "get yourself a room and come back in three-quarters of an hour. You'll dine with me."

Polozov waddled off, and Sanin engaged a cheap room, where he tidied himself up and had a little rest, after which he repaired to the vast suite occupied by his Serenity (*Durchlaucht*) Prince von Polozoff.

He found this "prince" ensconced in a luxurious velvet arm-chair in the midst of a splendid salon. Sanin's phlegmatic friend had already had a bath and changed into a magnificent satin dressing-gown. On his head was a crimson fez. Sanin went up to him and stood inspecting him for some minutes. Polozov sat motionless as an image, neither turning his head in the direction of Sanin, raising his eyebrows, nor uttering a sound. In very truth, a majestic spectacle! Sanin gazed at him for a minute or two and was just about to say something to break this sacred silence when the door into the next room suddenly opened, and a young and beautiful lady in a white silk dress trimmed with black lace, with diamonds on her fingers and round her neck, appeared on the threshold—Marya Nikolayevna Polozova herself. Her luxuriant chestnut hair hung on either side of her face, braided but not pinned up.

XXXIV

"Oh! Excuse me!" she said with a smile half embarrassed, half mocking, at the same time lifting the end of one braid and fixing her great grey luminous eyes on Sanin. "I didn't know you were here."

"Sanin, Dmitri Pavlovich, the friend of my childhood,"

said Polozov, still without turning his head or rising, but simply pointing in Sanin's direction.

"Yes, I know—you told me. Very glad to meet you. But I wanted to ask you, Ippolit Sidorych. . . . My maid is so stupid today. . . ."

"To do your hair?"

"Yes, if you don't mind. Excuse me," repeated Marya Nikolayevna, smiling as before and nodding at Sanin; turning rapidly, she disappeared through the door, leaving behind her the fugitive but graceful impression of an exquisite neck, marvellous shoulders, and a wonderful waist.

Polozov rose, swaying ponderously, and passed through the same door.

Sanin did not for a single moment doubt that the lady of the house had been perfectly aware of his presence in the salon of "Prince Polozoff" and that she had only wanted to show off her hair, which certainly was very beautiful. Sanin was secretly glad of Madame Polozova's ruse—if she wants to make an impression on me, to show off in front of me, perhaps she won't give me any trouble about the price of the estate! His heart was so filled with Gemma that all other women were as nothing to him, he scarcely noticed them, and this time, too, he contented himself with the thought: "It's quite true what I was told, that lady is a stunner!"

If he had not been in his present exalted frame of mind, he would no doubt have expressed himself very differently—Marya Nikolayevna Polozova, *née* Kolyshkina, was an extremely remarkable personage. And this not because she was exactly a beauty—indeed her countenance bore unmistakable traces of her plebeian origin. Her forehead was low, her nose somewhat fleshy and turned up; nor could she boast of delicacy of skin or elegance of hands and feet. But what did all that matter? It was not what Pushkin called "the shrine of beauty" which brought to a

halt anyone who happened to meet her, it was the charm of her vigorous femininity—a blend of the Russian and the Gipsy—which brought him to a halt, and willingly enough.

But Sanin was protected by the image of Gemma, as by the triple armour sung of by the poets of old.

Ten minutes later, Marya Nikolayevna reappeared, accompanied by her husband. She went up to Sanin, and there was that in her gait alone which had in those, alas, so distant times turned the heads of many a poor fool. "That woman comes up to you as if she were bringing you the happiness of your whole life," one such had said. She came up to Sanin and stretched out her hand, saying in Russian, in a voice at once caressing and reticent: "You'll wait for me, won't you? I'll be back soon."

Sanin bowed respectfully, but Marya Nikolayevna had already vanished behind the portière over the door into the passage, looking over her shoulder again in the act of vanishing and smiling again, leaving behind her the former graceful impression.

When she smiled, there showed in her cheeks not one, not even two, but three dimples, and her eyes smiled more than her lips, her long, delicious crimson lips, with two tiny moles at the left corner.

Polozov waddled into the room and once more settled into his arm-chair. He was as silent as ever, but a strange half-smile from time to time twitched his pasty, prematurely wrinkled cheeks.

He looked quite elderly though he was only three years older than Sanin.

The dinner to which he treated his guest would undoubtedly have satisfied the most exacting of gourmets, but to Sanin it appeared endless, intolerably irksome. Polozov ate slowly, "with feeling, understanding, and the proper stress," as people are urged to read, and bending attentively over his plate, with a preliminary sniff at al-

most every bite; he rinsed his mouth with the wine before swallowing it and smacked his lips afterwards. . . . But when the roast was brought in he suddenly began to talk—and what did he talk about? About merinos, of which he intended to buy a whole flock, and in such detail, with such tender fancy, using loving diminutives at every turn. When he had drunk a cup of almost boiling coffee (he had several times reminded the waiter, in a voice of tearful irritation, that yesterday he had been served cold coffee—"as cold as ice") and bitten off the end of a Havana with his yellow, crooked teeth, he dozed off according to his usual habit, much to the joy of Sanin, who began pacing up and down the room, his steps muffled by the thick carpet, dreaming of his future life with Gemma and of the news he would be able to take back to her. But Polozov waked up earlier than usual, as he himself remarked—he had only slept an hour and a half—swallowed a glass of iced seltzer and seven or eight tea-spoonfuls of preserves, Russian preserves, brought in by the valet in a bottle-green "Kiev" jar, without which dainty he said he could not possibly exist, and turned his puffy-lidded eyes upon Sanin, whom he invited to play a game of *Duraki** with him. Sanin consented gladly; he was afraid otherwise Polozov would start talking about his lambs, ewes, and fat-tailed sheep again. Host and guest turned into the drawing-room, the waiter brought a pack of cards, and the game started. They did not, of course, play for money.

Marya Nikolayevna found them engaged upon this innocent pastime when she returned from her visit to Countess Lasunskaya.

She laughed loudly at the sight of the card-table and the playing-cards. Sanin leaped from his seat, but she

* *Duraki* (fools)—a primitive card game resembling "Beggar My Neighbour."—*Tr.*

cried: "Go on, go on—I'll change and come back to you!" and disappeared once more, peeling off her gloves as she rustled away.

And she really did come back very soon. She had changed her fine dress for a loose gown of purple silk with hanging sleeves, confined at the waist by a thick twisted cord. She sat down beside her husband and waited till he was proclaimed "Fool," when she said: "That'll do, Fatty!" (At the word "Fatty" Sanin looked at her in astonishment, but she only smiled gaily, meeting his eyes boldly, and bringing all her dimples into play.) "That'll do, I can see you're sleepy; kiss my hand and be off, Monsieur Sanin and I will have a little talk."

"I'm not sleepy," drawled Polozov, rising heavily from his chair. "But I'll go if you want me to, and I'll kiss your hand."

She held out her hand to him, palm upwards, keeping her smiling gaze on Sanin all the time.

Polozov, too, glanced at him and then withdrew without even saying good night.

"Come, tell me all about it!" said Marya Nikolayevna eagerly, placing her bare elbows on the table and impatiently tapping the finger-nails of one hand against those of the other. "Is it true what they say—are you going to get married?"

As she spoke, Marya Nikolayevna bent her head on one side in order to look steadily and searchingly into Sanin's eyes.

XXXV

Such familiar behaviour on the part of Madame Polozova would probably have embarrassed Sanin, though he was no novice and had rubbed shoulders with all sorts of people, had he not seen in this very freedom and familiarity a happy omen for his enterprise. "We'll indulge

this rich lady's whims," he decided, and answered her as flippantly as she had questioned him: "Yes, I'm going to get married."

"Who to? A foreigner?"

"Yes."

"You haven't known her long, have you? Did you meet her in Frankfort?"

"Precisely."

"And who is she, if I may inquire?"

"You may. She is the daughter of a confectioner."

Marya Nikolayevna opened her eyes wide and raised her eyebrows.

"Why, that's charming," she said slowly. "Quite a marvel! I had begun to think that there were no more young people like you to be met with. A confectioner's daughter!"

"I see this surprises you," said Sanin, not without dignity, "but in the first place I have no prejudices. . . ."

"*In the first place*, it doesn't surprise me a bit," interrupted Marya Nikolayevna, "I have no prejudices, either. I am the daughter of a muzhik, myself. Yes, I am! So there! What surprises and rejoices me is to meet a man who is not afraid to love. You love her, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Is she very, very pretty?"

Sanin was slightly shocked by the question. . . . But it was too late to beat a retreat now.

"As you know, Marya Nikolayevna," he began, "every lover considers that there is no one like his beloved. But my fiancée is—a true beauty."

"Really! What's her style? Italian? Classical?"

"Yes, she has extremely regular features."

"Haven't you got a likeness of her?"

"No." (In those days photography did not exist, and daguerrotypes were only beginning to become popular.)

"What's her name?"

"Her name is—Gemma."

"And what's yours?"

"Dmitri."

"And your patronymic?"

"Pavlovich."

"Listen," said Marya Nikolayevna in the same slow tones, "I like you, Dmitri Pavlovich. I'm sure you're a good man. Give me your hand. Let's be friends!"

She pressed his hand firmly with her strong, white, beautifully formed fingers. Her hand was very little smaller than his, but it was much warmer, smoother and softer, and there was more vitality in it.

"What do you think has just come into my head?"

"What?"

"You won't be angry with me, will you? You say she is your betrothed. But was it really . . . absolutely necessary?"

Sanin frowned. "I don't understand you, Marya Nikolayevna."

Marya Nikolayevna laughed quietly, throwing back with a toss of her head a lock of hair which had fallen against her cheek. "He's a love, he really is," she murmured, half pensive, half abstracted. "A knight! And after that, believe those who say there are no more idealists left."

Marya Nikolayevna spoke with a pure Russian accent, the true Moscow speech, not in the aristocratic manner, but the way the common people talk.

"You were probably brought up at home, in an old-fashioned, God-fearing family?" she said. "What part of Russia do you come from?"

"The Tula Gubernia."

"Then we are countrymen. My father. . . . You know who my father was, don't you?"

"Yes, I do."

"He was born in Tula. . . . He was a Tula man. Very well. . . ." (Marya Nikolayevna purposely pronounced these words with a regular middle-class accent.) "Let's get down to business, then."

"What d'you mean . . . get down to business? What is your purpose in saying that?"

Marya Nikolayevna narrowed her eyes. "Well, what did you come here for?" (When she narrowed her eyes, their expression became very kindly and a little ironic; when she opened them wide, something hard and sinister shone in their cold luminous depths. It was the brows, thick, slightly arched, black as night, which lent a special beauty to her eyes.) "You want me to buy your estate, don't you? You need money to get married, don't you? Isn't this true?"

"Yes."

"And do you need a great deal?"

"I could manage with a few thousand francs to begin with. Your husband knows my estate. You can consult him, I would not ask a very high price."

Marya Nikolayevna slowly moved her head from left to right. "*In the first place*," she began, dropping out each word separately and tapping the sleeve of Sanin's frock-coat with her finger-tips, "I am not in the habit of consulting my husband, except about clothes—he's wonderful in that way. And *in the second place*, why do you say you will name a low price? I have no desire to take advantage of your being very much in love at present and ready to make any sacrifice. . . . I will not accept sacrifices from you. What? Instead of encouraging your—what d'you call them?—impulses, I am to flay you alive? This is not my habit. When occasion arises I can be ruthless—but in a different way."

Sanin could not make out whether she was laughing at him or in earnest, but kept saying to himself: "I must look out for myself with you, my dear!"

A man-servant entered with a Russian samovar, a tea-service, cream, rusks and other delicacies on a huge tray, placed all this on the table between Sanin and Madame Polozova, and disappeared.

She poured him out a cup of tea. "I hope you don't mind my fingers," she said, dropping a lump of sugar into his cup, though a pair of tongs lay on the table beside her.

"No, indeed . . . such fair hands. . . ."

He did not finish the sentence and almost choked over his first sip of tea, she looking at him the while with a clear, steady gaze.

"I mentioned the low price of my estate," he continued, "because I presumed that since you are abroad you might not have much ready money with you; besides, I realize that the sale or purchase of an estate in such conditions is a little unusual, and I feel compelled to take this into consideration."

Sanin was getting tied up in his arguments, and Marya Nikolayevna leaned quietly back in her arm-chair with folded arms, her clear, steady gaze fixed on his face. At last he stopped speaking.

"Never mind, go on, go on," she said, as if coming to his aid. "I'm listening—I like listening to you. Go on."

Sanin began describing his estate, telling her how many acres it included, exactly where it was, what economic resources it contained, and how best to derive profit from them . . . he even referred to the picturesque situation of the house itself, Marya Nikolayevna looking at him all the time, more and more intently and radiantly; her lips moved ever so slightly, but there was no smile on them. She bit her lower lip. At last he began to feel awkward and fell silent a second time.

"Dmitri Pavlovich," began Marya Nikolayevna and paused for thought. "Dmitri Pavlovich," she repeated, "look here, I am sure the purchase of your estate would

be a profitable affair for me and that we shall come to terms; but you must give me—two days, yes, two days. D'you think you can bear to be parted from your fiancée for two days? I won't keep you longer, against your will—I give you my word of honour. But if you need five or six thousand francs just now, I could let you have a loan with the greatest pleasure—and we'll settle up later on."

Sanin rose. "I must thank you, Marya Nikolayevna, for your cordial and courteous readiness to help one who is almost a stranger to you. But if you absolutely require it, I would prefer to await your decision with regard to my estate—and will stay here two days."

"I do require it, Dmitri Pavlovich. Will it be very hard for you? Very? Tell me."

"I love my fiancée, Marya Nikolayevna, and separation from her is not easy for me."

"You're a wonderful man!" sighed Marya Nikolayevna. "I promise not to keep you waiting too long. Must you go?"

"It's very late," said Sanin.

"And you need to rest after your journey and after playing *Duraki* with my husband. Tell me, are you a great friend of my husband, Ippolit Sidorych?"

"We were at school together."

"And was he like that even then?"

"Like what?" parried Sanin.

Marya Nikolayevna suddenly laughed, laughed till she was red in the face, raised her handkerchief to her lips, rose from her chair, swaying as if from fatigue, and went up to Sanin, putting out her hand to him.

He bowed and went towards the door.

"Be here early tomorrow, you hear me?" she called after him. He looked back as he was going out of the room and saw that she had again sunk into her chair, throwing her hands behind her head. The loose sleeves

of her gown had slipped back right to the shoulders, and it was impossible not to acknowledge that the pose of those arms, the whole of her figure, was thrillingly beautiful.

XXXVI

Long after midnight the lamp was still burning in Sanin's room. He sat at the table writing a letter to "his Gemma." He told her everything; described for her the Polozovs, husband and wife, but dwelt most of all on his own feelings, and ended by making an appointment with her in three days' time. (Here followed three exclamation-marks.) He carried this missive to the post early the next morning and went to take a walk in the Kurhaus Gardens, where the band was already playing. There were few people there as yet; he stopped in front of the band-stand to listen to a pot-pourri from *Robert le Diable*, then, after drinking coffee, turned into an alley running from the main walk and sat down on a bench to think.

The handle of a parasol struck him a swift and by no means gentle blow on the shoulder. He started. . . . Before him stood Marya Nikolayevna, attired in a dress of thin grey-green cloth, a hat of white tulle, and suède gloves; she was as fresh and pink as the summer morning, but the languor of untroubled slumber was still evident in her movements and glance.

"Good morning!" she said. "I sent for you this morning, but you were out already. I've only just drunk my second glass, they make me take the waters here, God knows why—who could be healthier than I am?—and so I have to walk about for a whole hour. Would you like to be my companion? And then we'll have coffee."

"I've had mine," said Sanin, getting up, "but I shall be very glad to walk with you."

"Give me your arm, then. Don't be afraid—your fiancée isn't here, she won't see you."

Sanin gave a forced smile. He felt an unpleasant sensation every time Marya Nikolayevna mentioned Gemma. But he bent towards her with hasty docility. . . . Marya Nikolayevna's hand descended slowly and gently on his arm, slipped along it, and seemed to cling to it.

"Come this way," she said, putting her open parasol over one shoulder. "I'm quite at home in the park here, I'll take you to all the beauty spots. And look here" (she was fond of these two words), "we won't talk about the sale, we'll have a good talk about it after breakfast; now I want you to tell me all about yourself . . . so that I shall know whom I have to deal with. And afterwards, if you like, I'll tell you about myself. Agreed?"

"But, Marya Nikolayevna, what can you find of interest. . . ."

"Stop! Stop! You misunderstand me. I'm not trying to flirt with you." Marya Nikolayevna shrugged her shoulders. "As if I would try to flirt with you, a man who has a fiancée like an antique statue! But you have goods—and I am a merchant. And I want to know all about your goods. Come on now, tell me about them! I want to know not only what I am buying, but who I am buying from. That was my father's rule. Well, begin. . . . You can leave out your childhood and begin by telling me how long you have been abroad. And where have you been up till now? But don't walk so fast, there's no hurry."

"I came here from Italy, where I stayed several months."

"And you seem to be attracted to everything Italian. Strange that you did not find an object there! Are you fond of art? Of pictures? Or do you care more for music?"

"I love art. . . . I love all that is beautiful."

"And music?"

"Music too."

"And I don't like it a bit. I care only for Russian songs, and then only in the country and in the spring—you know, song and dance together . . . red calico, strings of pearl beads across the women's foreheads, young grass in the pastures, the smell of smoke . . . that's what I like! But don't let's talk about me! Go on, tell me about yourself. . . ."

Marya Nikolayevna strolled on, looking occasionally at Sanin. She was very tall and her face was almost on a level with his.

He started telling her about his life—at first reluctantly, ineptly, and then, warming up to the subject, became quite garrulous. Marya Nikolayevna was a good listener, and she seemed to be so frank herself that others were unwittingly led into frankness. She had what Cardinal Retz called *le terrible don de la familiarité*. Sanin spoke to her of his travels, of his life in Petersburg, of his youth. . . . If Marya Nikolayevna had been a society lady with refined manners he would never have spoken so freely; but she called herself a good fellow and would not brook the slightest ceremony; and it was precisely thus that she presented herself to Sanin. At the same time this "good fellow" was walking at his side with a feline gait, leaning lightly on his arm and looking into his face; walking beside him in the shape of a young woman exuding that overpowering, maddening, subtle fascination so fatal to us weak mortals, a fascination which belongs to none but Slavonic natures, and among them only to those in which the blood is not pure, but mixed with other strains.

Sanin and Marya Nikolayevna strolled and chatted for over an hour. They never once stood still, but went on and on along the endless paths of the park, ascending slopes and admiring the view without stopping, descend-

ing to lower ground and plunging into impenetrable shade, and all the time arm in arm. Sanin could not help feeling an occasional surge of vexation—he had never been for such a long walk with Gemma, his dear Gemma . . . and this lady had taken possession of him—and there he was! “Aren’t you tired?” he asked her more than once. “I am never tired,” she replied. Every now and then they met others taking a stroll; almost every one of them greeted Marya Nikolayevna, some merely courteously, some almost obsequiously. To one of these, a handsome dark gentleman dressed in the height of fashion, she called out from the distance, in a faultless Paris accent: “*Comte, vous savez, il ne faut pas venir me voir —ni aujourd’hui, ni demain.*”

He raised his hat in silence and made her a sweeping bow.

“Who’s that?” asked Sanin; like all Russians he had the bad habit of asking questions.

“That? A Frenchman—there are lots of them hanging about here. . . . He makes up to me, too. But it’s time for coffee. Let’s go home. I suppose you’ve got your appetite back. My good man has probably got his peepers open by now.”

“Good man! Peepers!” repeated Sanin to himself. “And she speaks such wonderful French! What an odd creature!”

Marya Nikolayevna was not mistaken. When she and Sanin arrived at the hotel, the “good man,” or “fatty,” the inevitable fez on his head, was already seated at a table laid for breakfast.

“I thought you were never coming!” he exclaimed, pouting. “I was just going to have coffee without you.”

“Never mind,” said Marya Nikolayevna cheerfully. “Were you angry? It’s good for you, you know, otherwise

amazement. She knew all the ins and outs of management, put the most searching questions, went into everything. Every word she uttered hit the mark, she dotted all her "i's" and crossed all her "t's." Sanin had not expected such a catechism and had not prepared himself for it. And this catechism lasted an hour and a half. Sanin experienced the sensations of a criminal, seated on the narrow bench before a stern and perspicacious judge. "Why, it's a regular interrogation!" he murmured to himself wretchedly. Marya Nikolayevna laughed continually, as if she treated it all as a joke, but this did not make things any easier for Sanin. And when it transpired in the course of the "interrogation" that he was not quite clear about the exact meaning of the words "land repartition" and "tilth," he fairly broke out into a sweat....

"Very well," Marya Nikolayevna at last said decisively, "I know your estate now.... As well as you do. What is your price per capita?" (In those days, as is well known, the price of estates was reckoned according to the number of peasants on them.)

"Why... I think... I ought not to ask less than five hundred rubles..." Sanin brought out with difficulty. (O, Pantaleone, Pantaleone, where are you? Now is the time for you to exclaim once more: *Barbari!*)

Marya Nikolayevna raised her eyes to the ceiling, as if thinking.

"Why not?" she said after a pause. "That seems to me an acceptable price. But I bargained for two days' delay, and you will have to wait till tomorrow. I think we shall come to terms, and then you will tell me how much you want by way of deposit. And now—*basta così!*" she exclaimed, observing that Sanin was going to raise some objection. "We've discussed filthy lucre long enough... *à demain les affaires.* Look here—I'll give you" (here she glanced at the tiny enamelled watch tucked into her

belt) "...till three ... I must let you have some rest. Go and play roulette."

"I don't go in for gambling," said Sanin.

"Really? But you are perfection itself! I don't gamble myself, by the way. It's foolish to throw money away. But go to the Casino and have a look at the faces. You'll see some very odd types. There's one old lady with a diadem and a moustache—she's a marvel. And there's one of our princes there, he's very amusing, too. A majestic figure, an aquiline nose, and crosses himself under his waistcoat on the sly when he stakes a thaler. Read the magazines, walk about, in a word, do whatever you like. ... But I shall expect you at three ... *de pied ferme*. We must have dinner in good time. These absurd Germans start their evening performance at seven." She put out her hand. "*Sans rancune, n'est-ce pas?*"

"Come now, Marya Nikolayevna, why should I bear you ill will?"

"For tormenting you. Just you wait, there's more to come!" she added, narrowing her eyes, and all her dimples appeared at once on her flushed cheeks. "Good-bye!"

Sanin bowed and went out. He was pursued by a peal of joyous laughter and witnessed the following scene in a mirror as he passed by: Marya Nikolayevna had pushed her husband's fez over his eyes, and he was waving both his arms helplessly.

XXXVIII

Oh, what a deep sigh of relief Sanin heaved when he found himself alone in his room! Marya Nikolayevna had spoken the truth when she said he needed rest—rest from all these new acquaintances, encounters, conversations, rest in which to shake off the fumes which the sudden, unasked-for intimacy with a woman so alien to himself had sent stealing into his heart and mind. And at what

a time all this was going on! Almost the very next day after he had learned that Gemma loved him, that he had become engaged to her. Why, it was blasphemy! He mentally begged a thousand pardons of his pure, unstained dove, though there was nothing definite he could accuse himself of; he kissed the cross she had given him a thousand times. But for his hope for a swift and favourable end to the business which had taken him to Wiesbaden, he would have rushed back headlong—to dear Frankfort, to that dear house, now like a home to him, to her, to fall at her adored feet. . . . But there was no help for it! He would have to drink the cup to its dregs—to dress, to go out to dinner—and from there to the theatre. . . . If only she let him go early the next day!

There was another thing which troubled, even angered him: he dwelt constantly, with affection, with grateful rapture, on the thought of Gemma, of their life together, of the happiness the future held for him, and yet this strange woman, this Madame Polozova, persistently haunted him, nay, thrust herself before his eyes, and he could not shake off her image, could not forget the sound of her voice, the things she said, was continually aware of that peculiar perfume, subtle, fresh, penetrating, like the smell of yellow lilies, which was wafted from her clothes. The woman was obviously playing with him, trying first one trick, then another. But why? What did she want? Could it be simply the whim of a spoilt, wealthy woman, of a woman who could almost be described as depraved? And that husband! What a strange creature! What were his relations to her? And why should these questions invade Sanin's brain, what were Monsieur Polozov and his wife to him? Why could he not chase this haunting image away, even at the moment when his whole heart turned towards another, as bright and clear as a summer day? How dared these features lurk behind those other, almost divine features? But they did, and,

moreover, with a derisive grin. Those predatory grey eyes, those dimples in her cheeks, those snaky braids—surely, all this had not taken such a hold on him that he had not the strength to shake it off?

Nonsense! Nonsense! It will all vanish tomorrow, leaving no traces. But would she let him go tomorrow?

He went over all these questions again and again, and then, since it was nearly three, put on a black frock-coat and went for a stroll in the park before going to the Polozovs' rooms.

In their drawing-room he found the secretary of some embassy, a tall, fair-haired individual of German extraction, with an equine profile and a parting at the back of his head (a novelty at that time), and—who was this other? Who but von Dönhof, the officer with whom he had fought a duel a few days ago! He had certainly not expected to meet him here, and felt a moment's awkwardness, though he bowed to him.

"Have you met before?" asked Marya Nikolayevna, whom Sanin's embarrassment had not escaped.

"I have already had the honour," said Dönhof, and bending slightly towards Marya Nikolayevna, he added in undertones, smiling: "It's the one I told you about ... your compatriot ... the Russian...."

"No, really!" she exclaimed also in undertones, shaking a threatening finger at him and immediately saying good-bye to him and to the lanky secretary, who gave every sign of being mortally smitten by her charms, gaping whenever he looked at her. Dönhof departed immediately with polite submission, like a friend of the house who understood without having to be told what was needed of him. The secretary showed signs of obstinacy,

but Marya Nikolayevna got rid of him with scant ceremony.

"Go back to your sovereign lady," she said. (At that time a certain *Principessa di Monaco* who closely resembled a second-rate cocotte was staying in Wiesbaden.) "Why should you waste your time with a plebeian like me?"

"My dear Madam," the unfortunate secretary assured her, "all the *princesse* in the world...."

But Marya Nikolayevna was ruthless—and the secretary had to take himself and his back parting off.

Marya Nikolayevna was dressed greatly "to her advantage," as our grandmothers used to say. She had on a pink *glacé* silk dress, with sleeves *à la Fontanges*, and a large diamond in each ear. Her eyes were no less brilliant than the diamonds. She seemed to be in spirits and was at her very best.

She seated Sanin at her side and began talking to him about Paris, where she intended to go in a few days, and about the Germans, who bored her so, who were stupid when they tried to be clever, and inconveniently clever when they were stupid. And suddenly she asked him point-blank (*à brûle pourpoint*) whether it was true that he had fought a duel on account of a lady with the officer who had just left.

"How did you hear of it?" muttered the astonished Sanin.

"The world is full of rumours, Dmitri Pavlovich, and I happen to know that you were in the right, a thousand times, and behaved like a true knight. Tell me, was this lady your fiancée?"

Sanin wrinkled his forehead in a slight frown....

"All right, I won't," said Marya Nikolayevna hastily. "You don't like talking about it, forgive me, I won't do it any more! Don't be angry!" Polozov appeared from the

next room with a sheet of newspaper in his hand. "What do you want? Or is dinner ready?" she asked him.

"Dinner will be served in a minute. Fancy what I've just read in the *Northern Bee*—Prince Gromoboi is dead."

Marya Nikolayevna looked up.

"Is he? God rest his soul! Every February, on my birthday," she said, turning to Sanin, "he had all my rooms decorated with camellias. But that wasn't enough to make it worth while living in Petersburg in the winter. He must have been over seventy," she added, addressing her husband again.

"Yes. There's a description of his funeral in the paper. The whole Court was there. And Prince Kovrizhkin wrote verses for the occasion."

"How nice of him!"

"Shall I read them to you? The Prince calls him a true statesman."

"No, no, don't! *He* a statesman! He was nothing but Tatyana Yuryevna's man. Let's go in to dinner. Let the dead bury the dead. Dmitri Pavlovich—your arm!"

The dinner was as marvellous as on the preceding day, and passed in lively conversation. Marya Nikolayevna was a good talker—a rare gift in a woman, especially a Russian woman. She did not trouble to pick her words, and her female compatriots were her principal victims. Sanin burst out laughing more than once at some barbed and lively expression. Marya Nikolayevna hated above all else hypocrisy, smooth phrases, and lies . . . and found them almost everywhere. She seemed positively to flaunt the low surroundings in which she had been brought up, boasting of them and telling some distinctly queer stories about her relatives and childhood and calling herself a country bumpkin. Sanin could see that

she had in her time been through a great deal more than the majority of women of her age.

And Polozov ate deliberately, drank intently, only occasionally casting a glance at his wife or at Sanin from his pale, apparently purblind, but in fact extremely wide-awake eyes. "What a clever darling you are!" cried Marya Nikolayevna, turning to him. "How well you did all my shopping in Frankfort! I would give you a kiss on your forehead, but you don't go in for that sort of thing."

"I don't," said Polozov, cutting into a pine-apple with a silver fruit-knife.

Marya Nikolayevna regarded him, tapping on the table with her finger.

"Does our bet hold?" she said meaningly.

"Of course."

"Good! You will lose."

Polozov thrust out his chin. "Come, Marya Nikolayevna, I think it's you who will lose this time, for all your self-assurance."

"What is the bet about?" asked Sanin. "May I know?"

"Not just now," replied Marya Nikolayevna—and she laughed.

The clock struck seven. The waiter announced that the carriage was ready. Polozov saw his wife off and instantly drifted back to his chair.

"Mind you don't forget the letter to the steward!" called Marya Nikolayevna from the hall.

"I won't—don't worry! I'm a man of my word."

XXXIX

In 1840 the Wiesbaden theatre was a shabby edifice, and its company, for ranting mediocrity and conscientious, commonplace routine, was not an inch above the level which may be regarded as standard for all German

theatres, a perfect example in recent times being the Karlsruhe company, under the "illustrious" directorship of the famous Herr Devrient.

At the back of the box engaged for "Her Serenity Madame von Polozoff" (God alone knows how the waiter managed to get it, he could not have bribed the *Stadt-Director*, could he!) was a small ante-chamber furnished with sofas; before entering the box, Marya Nikolayevna asked Sanin to put up the light screen shutting it off from the rest of the theatre.

"I don't want people to see me," she said, "or they'll be swarming in." She made him sit down beside her, with his back to the auditorium, so that the box appeared to be empty.

The orchestra struck up the overture to *Le Nozze di Figaro* . . . the curtain went up, the play began.

It was one of those innumerable home-grown dramas, in which the author, more erudite than talented, diligently and clumsily pursued, in a faultless, but lifeless style, some "profound" or "vital" idea, presenting a so-called tragic conflict and spreading a dullness which may be called "Asiatic"—just as there is ordinary cholera and Asiatic cholera. Marya Nikolayevna sat patiently through half an act, but when the lover, learning of his beloved's unfaithfulness (he wore a brown frock-coat with puffed sleeves and a velveteen collar, a striped waistcoat with mother-of-pearl buttons, green trousers with patent-leather straps, and white suède gloves), when the lover, pressing his fists against his chest and sticking out his elbows at an acute angle, began howling like a dog, Marya Nikolayevna could bear no more.

"The worst French actor in the most god-forsaken little provincial town acts better and more naturally than the most famous German actor!" she cried indignantly. "Come here," she said to Sanin, patting the sofa beside her. "Let's talk."

Sanin obeyed.

Marya Nikolayevna glanced at him. "I see you're as mild as milk. Your wife will have an easy time. That clown—" she pointed with the tip of her fan at the howling actor, who played the part of a tutor in a private house—"that clown has brought back my youth to me—I was once in love with a tutor. He was my first—no, my second—love. I fell in love for the first time with a lay brother in the Donskoi Monastery. I was twelve years old. I only saw him on Sundays. He wore a velvet gown, scented himself with lavender-water, went through the crowd with the thurible, saying in French to the ladies: '*Pardon, excusez,*' and never raised his eyes. And his eye-lashes! They were as long as this!" Marya Nikolayevna indicated half the length of her little finger with her thumb-nail and showed it to Sanin. "My teacher was called Monsieur Gaston! He was ever so learned, you know, and very strict, a Swiss—and he had such a strong face. Whiskers as black as tar, a Grecian profile, and lips which looked as if shaped from molten iron. I was afraid of him. That man is the only person I have ever been afraid of. He was the tutor of my brother—the one who died, he was drowned. A Gipsy once foretold a violent death for me, but that's rubbish. I don't believe it. Can you imagine Ippolit Sidorych with a dagger?"

"There are other things one can die from, as well as a dagger," remarked Sanin.

"That's all nonsense. Are you superstitious? I'm not a bit. But what will be, will be! Monsieur Gaston lived in our house, his room was just over mine. Sometimes I used to wake up in the night and listen to his steps—he went to bed very late—and I would feel quite faint with awe . . . or some other feeling. My father himself was scarcely literate, but he gave us a good education. Fancy, I even know Latin."

"You? Latin?"

"Yes—I! Monsieur Gaston taught me. I read the *Aeneid* with him. Very dull, but there are some nice places in it. Do you remember when Dido and Aeneas are in the wood?..."

"Yes, yes, I remember," said Sanin hastily. He had long ago forgotten all his Latin and had but a very faint idea of the *Aeneid*.

Marya Nikolayevna directed at him that sidelong, upward glance of hers. "But you mustn't think I'm very learned. God knows I'm not, and I have no accomplishments. I can hardly write ... I can't even read aloud, really, can't play the piano, sketch, or sew—can't do anything. I am nothing but what you see me!"

She spread out her arms. "I am telling you all this," she continued, "in the first place so as not to have to listen to those imbeciles" (she pointed to the stage, where at the moment the actress was howling instead of the actor, she, too, sticking out her elbows), "and in the second place, because I am in your debt—you told me about yourself yesterday."

"It was your pleasure to ask me about myself," remarked Sanin.

Marya Nikolayevna suddenly turned towards him.

"And is it not your pleasure to know what sort of a woman I am? But of course I am not surprised," she added, leaning back against the sofa-cushions again. "When a man is going to get married, and for love, too, and after a duel, he has no time to be thinking of other women."

Marya Nikolayevna paused, nibbling at the handle of her fan with her large, even, milk-white teeth.

Again Sanin felt the fumes, which had been suffocating him for the last two days, enveloping his mind.

The conversation between himself and Marya Nikolayevna was carried on in undertones, almost in a whisper, and this irritated and agitated him.

When would it all come to an end? Weak-willed persons never put an end to anything, but wait for the end to come.

Somebody sneezed on the stage—the author had introduced a sneeze into his play by way of a “comic moment,” or “element.” There was no other comic element in the play, and the audience, grateful for even this, laughed.

The laughter irritated Sanin, too.

There were moments when he simply did not know whether he was angry or happy, bored or amused. Oh, if Gemma could have seen him!

“Funny, isn’t it?” said Marya Nikolayevna suddenly. “A person tells you perfectly calmly: ‘I intend to get married,’ but no one tells you calmly: ‘I’m going to throw myself into the water.’ And after all—what’s the difference? It *is* funny, isn’t it?”

Sanin felt a burst of annoyance. “There’s a great difference, Marya Nikolayevna. For some people there’s nothing terrible about jumping into water—they can swim. And as for strange marriages, since you have brought up the subject. . . .”

He broke off, biting his tongue.

Marya Nikolayevna struck the palm of her hand with her fan.

“Finish what you were going to say, Dmitri Pavlovich, finish what you were going to say. I know what it was: ‘Since you have brought up the subject, my dear lady,’ you were going to say, ‘what could be stranger than your own marriage? Don’t forget I have known your husband since he was a child.’ That’s what you were going to say, you who know how to swim.”

“Excuse me—” began Sanin.

“Isn’t it the truth? Isn’t it the truth?” insisted Marya

Nikolayevna. "Come now, look me in the face and tell me what I said isn't true."

Sanin did not know where to look. "Very well, then—it is true, since you insist," he blurted out finally.

Marya Nikolayevna shook her head. "Well, then. . . . And did you never ask yourself, you who know how to swim, what could have been the reason for such a strange act on the part of a woman who is neither poor, nor stupid, nor—plain? Perhaps this doesn't interest you, but never mind! I will tell you the reason, but not now, I will tell you when the interval is over. I'm afraid all the time someone will come in. . . ."

Hardly had Marya Nikolayevna said this when the door of the box was half opened and a face was thrust into the opening—a red face, shining with perspiration, still young, but already toothless, with a drooping nose, and enormous bat-like ears framed in long lank locks, with gold-rimmed spectacles over dull, inquisitive eyes, and pince-nez over the spectacles. The face peered into the box, caught sight of Marya Nikolayevna, grinned revoltingly, and perpetrated a series of little nods. A stringy neck supporting the head presently revealed itself.

Marya Nikolayevna waved her handkerchief at the face. "I'm not at home! *Ich bin nicht zu Hause, Herr P.! Ich bin nicht zu Hause. . . . Scat!*"

The face expressed astonishment, its owner gave a forced laugh and said in a sobbing voice, in imitation of Liszt, at whose feet he had once grovelled: "*Sehr gut! Sehr gut!*" before disappearing.

"Who is that strange creature?" inquired Sanin.

"That? A Wiesbaden critic. A literary critic, a flunkey, whatever you choose to call him. He is in the pay of a local contractor, and is therefore to praise everything and be enthusiastic about everyone, though he really is full of revolting spleen, which doesn't dare to vent. I'm afraid of him, he's a terrible gossip, he's sure to

run about telling everyone I'm in the theatre. But what does it matter, after all!"

The orchestra played a waltz, the curtain fluttered, and went up on a scene of affectation and whining. . . .

"Well," said Marya Nikolayevna, sinking down on the sofa again, "since you can't help yourself and are forced to sit beside me, instead of enjoying the company of your fiancée—don't roll your eyes so fiercely, I quite understand you, and I have promised to let you go wherever you like—but now listen to my tale. Would you like to know what I love above all things?"

"Freedom," suggested Sanin.

Marya Nikolayevna placed her hand over his.

"Yes, Dmitri Pavlovich," she said, and there was a note of genuine sincerity and solemnity in her voice. "Freedom above all and first of all. And please don't think I'm boasting—there's nothing praiseworthy in it—but that's what I've always been, and always will be, till the day of my death. I suppose I must have seen a great deal of servitude, and suffered from it myself, in my childhood. And . . . and . . . Monsieur Gaston, my teacher, opened my eyes. Perhaps you understand now why I married Ippolit Sidorych, I am free with him, utterly free, free as air, free as the wind. . . . And I knew this before my wedding, I knew I should be my own mistress, married to him."

Marya Nikolayevna paused, and cast aside her fan.

"And another thing I don't mind telling you—I have no objection to thinking . . . it's amusing and that's what our minds were given us for, but I never allow myself to think of the consequences of my own actions—I never think about them and never indulge in regrets, whatever the consequences—never the least in the world. It's not worth while. My motto is: *Cela ne tire pas à conséquence*—I don't know how to say it in Russian. After all, what is there that *tire à conséquence*? Nobody will call

me to account here, in this world, you know—and *there*" (she pointed upwards), "well, there, let them settle things their own way. When I come to be judged, I will not be I. Are you listening? You're not bored?"

Sanin had been sitting with his head bent. Now he raised it. "I'm not a bit bored, Marya Nikolayevna, I'm listening to you with the utmost curiosity. But I admit, I ask myself why you are telling me all this."

Marya Nikolayevna moved slightly on the sofa. "You ask yourself. . . . Are you really so slow-witted? Or is it just modesty?"

Sanin raised his head still higher.

"I am telling you all this," continued Marya Nikolayevna in calm tones not altogether in keeping with the expression of her face, "because I like you. Don't be surprised, I'm not joking. Because I should not wish you to take away an unpleasant memory of me . . . I care nothing about that, though—I mean a false one. That is why I lured you here and am sitting alone with you, and speaking so frankly to you. Yes, frankly. I am not lying. And note, Dmitri Pavlovich, I know you are in love with another, that you are going to marry her. . . do justice to my disinterestedness. But of course you now have an opportunity to say, in your turn: *Cela ne tire pas à conséquence.*"

She laughed, but her laugh broke off short, and she sat motionless, as if astonished at her own words, and in her eyes, usually so gay and bold, there was a shade of what might have been timidity, or even melancholy.

"What a snake! Oh, what a snake!" thought Sanin. "But what a beautiful snake!"

"Give me my lorgnette," said Marya Nikolayevna abruptly. "I want to look—can that *jeune première* really be such a fright? You'd think the government had fixed on her with a moral purpose, so that the young men shouldn't fall in love with her."

Sanin handed her the lorgnette, and she, taking it from him, held his hand in hers for a brief moment.

"Don't be so serious," she whispered to him, smiling. "Look here—no one can fetter me, but then I never try to fetter others. I love freedom and acknowledge no obligations—and not for myself alone. Now move away a little and let's listen to the play."

Marya Nikolayevna trained her lorgnette on the stage, and Sanin looked in the same direction, seated beside her in the half-dark of the box, involuntarily breathing in the warmth and fragrance of her voluptuous body, and as involuntarily turning over in his mind all she had told him in the course of the evening—especially during the last few minutes.

XL

The play went on for an hour or more, but Marya Nikolayevna and Sanin soon stopped looking at the stage, and were deep in talk again. Their talk followed the same path as before, but this time Sanin was not so silent. He was inwardly angry with himself and with Marya Nikolayevna; he attempted to show her the groundlessness of her "theory"—as if she could be interested in theories! He began arguing with her, to her secret delight—if he argues, it means he is yielding, or will yield. He has swallowed the bait, he is giving in, he is getting tame. She argued, laughed, agreed, seemed to think, pounced . . . and all the time their faces came nearer and nearer, his eyes no longer turned away from hers. . . . Those eyes of hers seemed to rove over his face, over all his features, and he smiled back, out of politeness, but still he smiled. The very fact that he had come round to abstractions, that he argued about honesty in mutual relations, about duty, and the sacredness of love and marriage, suited her plans. Everybody knows that such abstractions make the very best starting point. . . .

Those who knew Marya Nikolayevna well declared that when something tender and modest, something almost virginally shy was aroused in her robust and powerful nature—and where on earth did that “something” come from?—then . . . oh, then things had taken a dangerous turn.

Things were apparently taking this turn for Sanin now. He would have been filled with self-contempt if he had had a moment in which he could concentrate; but he had no time either to concentrate or to despise himself.

And she made the most of her time. And all this simply because he was not a bad-looking fellow! Who is to say what is an advantage and what is the reverse?

The play came to an end. Marya Nikolayevna asked Sanin to put her shawl on for her, and stood motionless as he wrapped its soft folds round her truly majestic shoulders. She then took his arm and went out into the corridor—and almost cried out: at the very door of the box, like a ghost, stood Dönhof. And just behind him loomed the grotesque figure of the Wiesbaden critic. The shiny face of the literary critic was radiant with spiteful relish.

“Allow me to find your carriage for you, Madame,” said the young officer, and there was a quiver of ill-suppressed fury in his voice.

“No, thank you,” she replied. “My footman will do that. Stay where you are!” she added in an imperative whisper and moved swiftly on, drawing Sanin after her.

“Go to the devil! What are you sticking to me for?” barked Dönhof suddenly, turning on the critic. He had to vent his feelings on someone.

“*Sehr gut! Sehr gut!*” muttered the critic, effacing himself.

Marya Nikolayevna's footman, who was waiting in the porch, found her carriage in the twinkling of an eye—she hurried into it, and Sanin leaped after her. The door slammed, and Marya Nikolayevna burst into peals of laughter.

"What are you laughing at?" Sanin asked her.

"Oh, you must excuse me . . . it just came into my head: what if Dönhof were to fight another duel with you—on my account! Wouldn't that be a marvel?"

"Do you know him very well?" asked Sanin.

"That boy? He runs my errands. Don't you worry!"

"I'm not worrying in the least."

Marya Nikolayevna sighed.

"Oh, I know you're not worrying. But look here! You're so nice, I'm sure you won't refuse me one last request. Don't forget I'm leaving for Paris in three days and you are going back to Frankfort. Who knows when we shall meet again!"

"What request?"

"I suppose you can ride?"

"Oh yes!"

"Well, then. I'll take you with me tomorrow morning, and we'll ride out of town together. We'll have splendid horses. Then we'll come back, polish off our business, and *finis*! Don't be surprised, don't say it's a whim, that I am mad—very likely I am—but simply say: 'I will.'"

Marya Nikolayevna turned her face to him. It was dark in the carriage, but this only made her eyes gleam still more brightly.

"Very well, I will," said Sanin with a sigh.

"Heigh-ho!" she said teasingly. "I know why you sighed like that—you meant: in for a penny, in for a pound! But no, no! You're a darling, you're good, and I will keep my promise. Here's my hand, without a glove, the right one, the one for business. Take it—and believe in it. I scarcely know myself what kind of a woman I

am, but at least I'm an honest person, a person you can do business with."

Before he knew what he was doing, Sanin lifted this hand to his lips. Drawing it gently away, Marya Nikolayevna fell suddenly silent and did not say another word till the carriage came to a stop.

She rose to get out. What was that? Was it Sanin's imagination or had he really felt a rapid burning touch on his cheek?

"Tomorrow!" whispered Marya Nikolayevna on her way up the staircase, lit up by the rays from a four-branched candlestick which the gold-braided hall-porter had seized the moment she appeared. Her eyes were lowered. "Tomorrow!"

When he got back to his room, Sanin found a letter from Gemma on the table. His first emotion was fear, but the instant after he rejoiced, in order to conceal his fear from himself. The letter consisted of only a few lines. She was glad of the favourable beginning of his business, advised him to be patient, and added that everyone at home was well and joyfully anticipating his return. The letter seemed a little cold to Sanin, but he picked up his pen and took out a sheet of paper, only to fling them down again. "What am I to write? I'll be going back myself tomorrow—and high time!"

He went to bed at once and tried to fall asleep as quickly as possible. If he had stayed up and awake he would certainly have begun to think about Gemma, and somehow he felt ashamed to think of her. The voice of conscience stirred within him. But he reassured himself with the thought that everything would be quite over by tomorrow, and he would bid good-bye forever to that eccentric lady, and forget all this nonsense! . . .

Weak-willed people, when talking to themselves, are fond of using energetic expressions. *Et puis . . . cela ne tire pas à conséquence!*

Such were Sanin's thoughts as he went to bed; but what were his thoughts the next morning, when Marya Nikolayevna tapped at his door impatiently with the coral-headed handle of her whip and appeared in the doorway of his room, the train of her dark-blue riding-habit looped over her arm, a small man's hat perched on her loosely braided hair, a veil thrown back over her shoulders, a challenging smile on her lips, in her eyes, spreading over her whole face? What he then thought history does not relate.

"Well? Are you ready?" her gay voice rang out.

Sanin buttoned up his coat and took up his hat in silence. Marya Nikolayevna cast a bright look at him, nodded, and ran down the stairs. And he ran down after her.

The horses were already standing in the road in front of the entrance. There were three of them—for Marya Nikolayevna, a tawny-gold thoroughbred mare, with a lean muzzle and a twitching lip, a prominent black eye, stag-like legs, rather bony, but handsome and hot as flame; for Sanin, a powerful, broad-chested, rather heavy-limbed horse, black all over; the third was intended for the groom. Marya Nikolayevna leaped lightly into the saddle. The mare pawed the ground, prancing, arching its tail and drawing in its croup, but Marya Nikolayevna (a splendid horse-woman!) kept her seat. She still had to say good-bye to Polozov who, in his invariable fez and unbuttoned dressing-gown, appeared on the balcony, waving a batiste handkerchief, without, however, the slightest smile, indeed almost with a frown. Sanin mounted his horse, too; Marya Nikolayevna saluted Polozov with her riding-crop, then struck her horse on the arched flat neck. The mare reared, leaped forward, and started off at a rapid mincing walk, quivering all

over, tugging at the bit, snapping and snorting nervously. Sanin rode behind, looking at Marya Nikolayevna. Her slender, flexible figure, neatly but not tightly corsetted, swayed with easy, confident grace. Glancing back, she summoned him with a look of her eyes. He caught up with her.

"Isn't it nice?" she said. "I want to tell you before we part that you are a darling—and you will never regret this."

Uttering these last words, she nodded several times, as if desirous of emphasizing them and making him feel their significance.

Sanin was amazed to see her so happy. There was that solemn expression on her face sometimes seen on the faces of children when they are very, very pleased.

They rode at a walk to the near-by gates of the town, but once on the high road they began to trot. The weather was glorious, a regular summer day. The wind streamed in their faces, whistling past their ears with a pleasant noise. They were happy. A consciousness of youthful, healthy life, of the free, rapid movements with which they advanced, possessed them both, and every movement enhanced it. Marya Nikolayevna reined in her horse and once more rode at a walk. Sanin followed her example.

"Ah!" she exclaimed with a profound, blissful sigh, "this is the only thing worth living for! To bring off what you wanted, what seemed impossible. My cup is full, my soul is full to the brim!" She drew her hand across her throat. "And what a good-natured person you feel. Look how kind I am now! I feel as if I could embrace the whole world. No, not the whole world—I wouldn't embrace *him*." She pointed with her whip to a ragged old man creeping along the side of the road. "But I wouldn't mind making him happy. Here—take it!" she cried loudly in German and threw her pouch at the old man's feet. The tiny, weighted pouch (there were

no such things as purses in those days) fell on the road with a thud. The wayfarer, astonished, came to a halt, but Marya Nikolayevna only burst out laughing and set her horse at a gallop.

"Are you so fond of riding?" Sanin asked when he caught her up.

Marya Nikolayevna reined in her horse abruptly again—she recognized no other manner of stopping it.

"I wanted to run away from his gratitude. Anyone who thanks me spoils my pleasure. I didn't do it for him, you know, but for myself. How dare he thank me? What did you say? I didn't hear."

"I asked you . . . I wanted to know why you were so cheerful today."

"Look here!" said Marya Nikolayevna. Again she either did not hear Sanin or did not see fit to answer his question. "I'm sick of that groom following us about, and probably wondering all the time when the gentry mean to go home. . . . How are we to get rid of him?" She drew a little note-book out of her pocket with a rapid movement. "Shall I send him back to town with a letter? No, that won't do. Oh, I know! Isn't that an inn just ahead?"

Sanin glanced in the direction she indicated.

"Seems to be."

"Splendid! I'll make him stop there and drink beer till we get back."

"But what will he think?"

"What does that matter to us? And he won't think at all, he'll just drink beer. Come on, Sanin!" (It was the first time she had called him by his surname.) "Forward! At a trot!"

When they got to the inn, Marya Nikolayevna called the groom to her and told him her wishes. The groom, who was of English extraction and had the English temperament, silently raised his hand to the peak of his cap,

leaped out of the saddle and led his horse off by the bridle.

"Now we are as free as air!" cried Marya Nikolayevna. "Where shall we go? North, south, east, or west? Look—I'm like the King of Hungary at his coronation." (She pointed with her whip in all four directions.) "All is ours. No, I'll tell you what—see those lovely mountains over there—and that forest? Let's go there, to the mountains, to the mountains!"

In die Berge, wo die Freiheit thront!

She turned off the high road and galloped along a narrow, untrodden road which really did seem to lead to the mountains. Sanin galloped after her.

XLII

The road soon became a path and at last disappeared altogether, cut off by a ditch. Sanin advised turning back, but Marya Nikolayevna said: "No, I want to go to the mountains. Let's ride straight ahead, as the crow flies." And she jumped her horse over the ditch. Sanin did the same. After the ditch came a meadow, at first dry, then damp, and finally almost marshy; water oozed everywhere. Marya Nikolayevna purposely rode her horse through the pools, laughing and exclaiming:

"Let's pretend we're children!"

"D'you know what hunting in the puddles means?" she asked Sanin.

"I do," he replied.

"My uncle used to hunt with dogs," she went on. "I used to ride with him in the spring. Marvellous! And now you and I are hunting in the puddles. But look here! You're a Russian, and yet you are going to marry an Italian? Oh, well, that's your trouble. What's this? An-

other ditch? Hoop-la!" The horse jumped, and Marya Nikolayevna's hat fell off, her curls tumbling about her shoulders. Sanin was just going to dismount and pick up the hat, when, shouting: "Don't touch it! I'll get it myself!" she bent low in the saddle, catching the end of her veil on the handle of her riding-crop, and really did get the hat, which she set on her head; she did not tuck her hair under it, however, but dashed off with a wild whoop. At her side galloped Sanin, at her side he jumped ditches, fences, brooks, sometimes jumping short and scrambling over, galloping uphill and downhill, looking into her face all the time. And what a remarkable face it was—like an opening flower. The eyes, avid, luminous, wild, were wide open; the lips were parted; the dilated nostrils inhaled the air eagerly. She looked straight in front of her, as if her intrepid soul would take possession of all that she saw—the earth, the sky, the sun, the very air, and she seemed to have only one regret—there was not enough danger for her to overcome. "Sanin," she cried, "it's like in Bürger's *Lenore*. Only you're not dead, are you? Not dead? I'm alive!" Her reckless animal spirits were in full play. She was no longer an Amazon putting her horse at a gallop, she was a young female centaur, half-god, half-beast, and the dignified, well-regulated countryside lay before her in mute astonishment at such riotous pleasure.

At last Marya Nikolayevna reined in her foaming, bespattered horse. It swayed beneath her weight, and Sanin's powerful but ponderous stallion breathed ster-torously.

"Well— isn't this joy?" asked Marya Nikolayevna in an ecstatic whisper.

"It is!" replied Sanin enthusiastically. His blood was surging riotously, too.

"Just you wait, that's not all!" She stretched out her hand. The glove on it was torn.

"I said I'd take you to the forest, to the mountains—there they are, the mountains!" Yes—the mountains, crowned with high forests, extended about two hundred yards from the place to which the wild riders had arrived. "Look. And there's the road to them. We'll get our breath back, and then—forward! But at a walk. We must give our horses a rest."

They rode on. Marya Nikolayevna tossed back her hair with a single vigorous gesture. Then she looked at her gloves—and took them off. "My hands will smell of leather," she said, "but you won't mind that, will you?"

Marya Nikolayevna smiled, and Sanin smiled, too. The furious gallop seemed to have completed their intimacy, to have made them friends.

"How old are you?" she asked suddenly.

"Twenty-two."

"No, really? I'm twenty-two, too. A nice age. Even if you added them up old age would still be a long way off. But how hot it is! Tell me, am I very red?"

"As red as a poppy."

Marya Nikolayevna wiped her face with her handkerchief.

"If only we can get to the woods—it'll be cool there. Such an old, old forest, like an old friend! Have you any friends?"

Sanin paused to think. "Yes . . . but not many. No real ones."

"I have real friends, but they're not old ones. There's my mare—she's a good friend. See how carefully she carries me. Oh, how nice it is here! Am I really going to Paris the day after tomorrow?"

"Yes—are you really?" echoed Sanin.

"And you are going to Frankfort?"

"I am certainly going to Frankfort."

"*Ach*, well—I wish you joy! But today is ours—ours!"

The horses reached the outskirts of the forest and entered it. They were enveloped on all sides by its wide, benignant shade.

"But this is heaven!" exclaimed Marya Nikolayevna. "Let's go deeper into the shade, Sanin!"

The horses picked their way "deeper into the shade," swaying slightly and breathing noisily. Their path took a sudden turn and entered a rather narrow gorge. A mingled smell of heather, ferns and resin, of damp and last year's decaying leaves, hung in the dense, drowsy atmosphere. A pungent chill breathed from clefts in great brown crags. Round hillocks, overgrown with green moss, rose on either side of the path.

"Stop!" cried Marya Nikolayevna. "I want to sit and rest on this velvet cushion. Help me to dismount!"

Sanin leaped from the saddle and ran up to her. She leaned on his shoulder, jumped down briskly and seated herself on a mossy mound. He stood in front of her, holding the bridles of both horses.

She raised her eyes to his face. "Do you know how to forget, Sanin?"

Sanin remembered what had happened the previous day in the carriage. "Is this a question or a reproach?" he countered.

"I have never reproached anyone in my life. Do you believe in spells?"

"How d'you mean?"

"In spells. You know, what they sing about in our songs. In Russian folk songs."

"Oh, that's what you mean!" drawled Sanin.

"Yes. I believe in them—and so will you, some day."

"Spells," repeated Sanin. "Anything is possible. I didn't believe in them before, but I do, now. I no longer know myself."

Marya Nikolayevna seemed to think, and glanced behind her.

"This place is familiar to me somehow. Look behind that enormous oak, Sanin—is there a red wooden cross there?"

Sanin took a few steps to the side. "There is."

Marya Nikolayevna chuckled "Good. I know where we are. We're not lost yet. What's that noise—a wood-cutter?"

Sanin peered into the thicket. "Yes, somebody's felling dry branches."

"I must tidy my hair," said Marya Nikolayevna. "Or he'll see me and start thinking things." She took off her hat and began rebraiding her long plaits in dignified silence. Sanin stood in front of her. Her graceful limbs could clearly be traced beneath the dark folds of her habit, to which tufts of moss clung here and there.

One of the horses behind Sanin suddenly tossed its head. He started involuntarily, shaking from head to foot. Everything within him was in a tumult, his nerves were as taut as fiddle-strings. He had spoken the truth when he said he no longer knew himself. He seemed to be in very truth bewitched. His whole being was filled with one thing, one thought, one desire. Marya Nikolayevna cast a searching look at him.

"That's more like it," she said at last, putting on her hat again. "Why don't you sit down? Here! No, wait a minute—don't sit down. What's that?"

A hollow rumbling shook the air over the tops of the trees.

"Can it be thunder?"

"It seems to be," replied Sanin.

"Why, it's a real holiday—a real holiday! It's the crowning touch!" The hollow rumble came again, rose to a higher note and sank to a reverberant growl. "Bravo! *Bis!* Remember talking about the *Aeneid* yesterday? *They* were caught in a storm in the forest, too. But we must take shelter." She rose swiftly to her feet. "Bring my

horse nearer! Put out your hand. That's right. I'm not very heavy."

Swift as a bird she leapt on to her saddle. Sanin mounted his horse too.

"Are you going—home?" he asked uncertainly.

"Home?" she echoed with a rising inflection, gathering up the reins. "Follow me!" she commanded, almost rudely.

She rode along the path, went past the red cross, descended into the plain, rode as far as the cross-roads, turned right, and once more took the upward path to the mountain. She followed the path deeper and deeper into the forest, apparently well aware where she was going. She said nothing and never looked back, moving ahead imperiously, and he followed her humbly and obediently, without a spark of will in his palpitating heart. A light drizzle began. She urged on her horse, and Sanin did not lag behind. Through the dark green of young firs he at last caught sight of a poor hut with a low trellised door in its wall, standing beneath the shelter of an overhanging grey rock. Marya Nikolayevna forced her horse through the undergrowth and jumped off right in front of the door of the hut. "Aeneas?" she whispered.

Four hours later Marya Nikolayevna and Sanin, accompanied by the groom dozing in his saddle, returned to Wiesbaden, and to the hotel. Monsieur Polozov met his wife, the letter to the steward in his hands. He cast a scrutinizing glance at her, and an expression of some dissatisfaction showed on his face. "Do you mean to tell me I've lost?" he muttered.

Marya Nikolayevna shrugged her shoulders for all reply.

And two hours later on that same day Sanin stood before her in his own room, a lost, ruined man.

"Where are you going?" she asked him. "To Paris—or Frankfort?"

"I will go where you go, and I will stay wherever you are till you drive me away," he replied desperately and fell on his knees, pressing his lips to her hands. Releasing her hands she placed them on his head—and suddenly grabbed at his hair with her ten fingers. Slowly fingering and tweaking the docile hair, she stood erect, a triumphant smile wreathing her lips, while her wide-open eyes, luminous almost to whiteness, expressed nothing but the ruthless blankness and satiety of victory. The hawk digging its talons into a captured bird has such eyes.

XLIII

This is what Sanin remembered, when he came across a garnet cross, as he went through his papers in the stillness of his study. The events just related rose in vivid succession before his inward eye. But when he got to the moment of his humiliating prayer to Madame Polozova, to the time when he had cast himself beneath her feet, to the beginning of his servitude, he turned from the images he had evoked, he could not bear to call any more. It was not that his memory failed him, not that! He knew, knew only too well, what had happened after this moment, but even now, so many years after, he was suffocated by shame. He feared the feeling of unconquerable self-contempt which he knew very well would sweep over him like a wave, drowning all other sensations, if he did not bid memory be silent. But turn away as he might from the rising memories, he could not stifle them altogether. He recalled the miserable, tearful, false, pitiful letter he had sent Gemma, a letter which remained unanswered. To appear before her, to return to her after

such deception; such treachery—no, no, there was just enough conscience and honour left in him to prevent him from doing this! Moreover, he had lost all confidence in himself, all self-respect; he no longer dared to answer for anything. Sanin remembered, too—oh, the shame of it!—how he had then sent Polozov's valet to Frankfort for his things, how terrified he had been, how he had had only one thought—to get to Paris, to Paris as quickly as possible. How, at the order of Marya Nikolayevna, he had tried to ingratiate himself with Ippolit Sidorych, made up to von Dönhof, on whose finger he had seen an iron ring exactly like the one Marya Nikolayevna had given him! Then came memories which were still worse, still more shameful. The waiter had handed him a visiting-card, on which was inscribed the name of Pantaleone Cippatola, singer to the court of His Highness the Duke of Modena. He had hidden from the old man but had not been able to avoid a meeting with him in the hotel-corridor, and he could still see before him the angry face beneath the upward curling grey forelock. The old eyes had burned like live coals, and menacing cries and curses had rang in Sanin's ears; he had made out the words: "*Maledizione! Codardo! Infame traditore!*" Sanin winces, shakes his head, turns away again and again, but he still sees himself seated on the narrow front bench of the travelling carriage. On the comfortable back seat recline Marya Nikolayevna and Ippolit Sidorych, four horses dash through the streets of Wiesbaden at a steady trot—to Paris, to Paris! Ippolit Sidorych eats a pear, peeled for him by Sanin, and Marya Nikolayevna looks at Sanin with the smile already familiar to him, a subjugated man—the smile of the owner, the sovereign.

But oh, heavens, there, at the corner of the street, not far from the outskirts of the town, is not that Pantaleone again, and who is that with him? Can it be Emilio? Yes, it is he, the enthusiastic, once devoted lad! How recently

his youthful heart was filled with awe for his hero, his ideal, and now his pale, beautiful face—so beautiful that Marya Nikolayevna noticed him and leaned out of the carriage window—this noble countenance breathes rage and contempt. The eyes—so like hers—glare at Sanin, the lips are tightly closed . . . only opening to emit insulting words. . . .

Now Pantaleone flings out his arm and points Sanin out—to whom? To Tartaglia, standing beside him, and Tartaglia barks at Sanin, and in the very bark of the honest dog there is intolerable insult. . . . Ugh!

And then—life in Paris—and all the humiliations, all the vile torments known to the slave who has no right to show jealousy, to complain, and who is at last flung aside like a used glove. . . .

Then the return to the native land, a life poisoned and ravaged, petty worries, petty cares, bitter, fruitless repentance, and oblivion no less fruitless and bitter—his punishment was almost intangible, but made itself felt incessantly, every moment, like some dull but unremitting pain, like the payment of an immense, incalculable debt, a farthing at a time. . . .

His cup was full . . . enough!

How was it that the little cross Gemma had given him had survived, why had he not returned it, how was it that until this moment he had never happened upon it? He sat long in meditation, and despite the experience of so many years he was still unable to understand how he could have abandoned Gemma, whom he had loved so tenderly, so passionately, for a woman he had never loved at all. The next day he astonished all his friends and acquaintances by telling them he was going abroad.

Society was astounded. Sanin to leave Petersburg in the very middle of the winter, after having just rented and

furnished an excellent apartment and taken tickets for the Italian opera season, in which Madame Patti—yes, Madame Patti herself—was taking part. The friends and acquaintances were dumbfounded. But it is not in human nature to think long about the affairs of others, and when Sanin left to go abroad the only person who saw him off at the station was a French tailor, and he only in the hope of getting an outstanding account paid off, *pour un saute-en-barque en velours noir, tout à fait chic*.

XLIV

Sanin told his friends he was going abroad, but he did not say precisely where. The reader will easily guess that he made straight for Frankfort. Thanks to the ubiquitous railway he was there three days after his departure from Petersburg. He had not visited the town since 1840. The "White Swan" still flourished on its former site but was no longer regarded as a first-class hotel. The Zeil, the principal street of Frankfort, was very little altered, but there was not a trace left of the house of Madame Roselli, nay of the very street in which her confectioner's shop had stood. Sanin roamed the streets once so familiar to him in a daze, but found nothing he could recognize. The old buildings had disappeared; they had been substituted by new streets, lined with unbroken rows of great houses and elegant villas. The trees and bushes in the public park where he had told Gemma of his love had grown so tall and dense, and the place looked so different, that Sanin asked himself if it were the old park or not. What was he to do? How and where was he to make inquiries? Thirty years had elapsed. It was no easy task he had set himself. Ask as he might, nobody had so much as heard the name Roselli. The hotel proprietor advised him to inquire at the public library, where, he said, he would find all the old newspapers, but what use that would be, the

hotel proprietor could not say. In desperation Sanin inquired for Herr Klüber. The name was well-known to the proprietor, but here also Sanin met with failure. The elegant shopman, who had made his way and risen to the rank of capitalist, had met with heavy losses, gone bankrupt, and died in prison. This news, by the way, did not cause Sanin the slightest distress. He was just beginning to regard his journey as a wild-goose chase, when one day, turning the leaves of a Frankfort directory, he came across the name of von Dönhof, retired with the rank of major (*Major v. D.*). He immediately took a carriage and set off—though why this particular von Dönhof should be the one he had known and why, even if he was, he should be able to tell him anything about the Roselli family, he could not have said. But a drowning man catches at a straw.

Sanin found the retired major at home and instantly recognized his ancient foe in the gentleman with greying hair. Von Dönhof recognized him, too, and was even glad to see him, for it reminded him of his youth and his youthful pranks. Sanin learned from him that the Roselli family had long settled in America, in New York, that Gemma had married a businessman, that Dönhof himself, by the way, had an acquaintance who was a businessman, too, and who probably knew their address, for he did a great deal of business with America. Sanin persuaded von Dönhof to go and see this acquaintance, and—oh, joy!—von Dönhof brought back the address of Gemma's husband—Mr. Jeremy Slocum, 501, Broadway, New York. But this address dated from 1863.

"Let us hope," cried von Dönhof, "that our former Frankfort beauty is still alive and has not left New York! By the way," he added, lowering his voice, "and is that Russian lady, the one who was staying in Wiesbaden then, you know, Madame von Bo . . . von Bozolov—still alive?"

..

"No," said Sanin. "She died long ago."

Von Dönhof looked up, but observing that Sanin had turned aside, frowning, he departed without another word.

That same day Sanin sent a letter to Mrs. Gemma Slocum in New York, in which he told her he was writing from Frankfort, where he had gone with the single purpose of discovering traces of her. That he was fully aware that he had deprived himself of the slightest right to an answer from her. That he had done nothing to merit her forgiveness, and could only hope that, in the midst of her present happy surroundings, she had long forgotten his very existence. He added that he had made up his mind to recall himself to her owing to a chance circumstance which had brought the past before him all too vividly. He told her about his life, lonely, joyless, without wife or child. He entreated her to try and understand the cause of his addressing her, not to allow him to bear with him to the grave his bitter sense of guilt—so long-standing, but still unforgiven—and to gladden him with some news, however slight, of herself and her life in the New World to which she had gone. "By writing just one word to me," Sanin ended his letter, "you will be doing a good deed, worthy of your noble heart, and I will thank you till the last day of my life. I am staying at the '*White Swan*'" (he underlined the words) "and will wait here till the spring for your answer."

He posted the letter and settled down to wait. He stayed in the hotel for six whole weeks, hardly moving out of his room and never seeing a soul. There was no one to write to him from Russia or anywhere else, and that suited him perfectly. If a letter came for him he would know beforehand that it was the one he was expecting. He read from morning till night, not magazines, but grave volumes, historical works. The continual read-

ing, the silence, the hermit-like, secluded life, was exactly what his mood needed—for that alone he was thankful to Gemma. But was she alive or dead? Would she reply?

At last a letter came for him with an American stamp, from New York. The writing on the envelope looked English. He did not recognize it, and he felt a pang at his heart. He could not make up his mind to tear the envelope open immediately. When he did, he glanced at the signature first—*Gemma*. Tears brimmed up in his eyes—the very fact that she had signed her own name without the surname seemed to him a token of reconciliation, of forgiveness. He unfolded the thin sheet of bluish note-paper, and a photograph fell out of it. He picked it up hastily, and was thunderstruck—it was Gemma herself, Gemma to the life, as young as when he had known her thirty years ago. The same eyes, the same lips, the very same type of face. On the other side of the photograph were written the words: “My daughter Marianna.” The letter itself was simple and affectionate. Gemma thanked Sanin for not having hesitated to write to her, for having had faith in her. She did not conceal from him that she had, indeed, after his flight, gone through sad times, but added immediately that she had always considered her meeting with him as fortunate, and still did, since this meeting had prevented her from becoming the wife of Herr Klüber, and had thus, though indirectly, been the cause of her marriage with her present husband, with whom she had now been living for twenty-seven years in complete happiness, sufficiency, and abundance. Their house was known to the whole of New York. Gemma went on to inform Sanin that she had five children—four sons and one eighteen-year-old daughter, a bride-to-be, whose photograph she sent him, since the general opinion was that she was exactly like her mother. Gemma kept her sad news for the end of her letter. Frau Lenore had died in New York, whither she had followed her daughter and

son-in-law, but had lived long enough to rejoice in her children's happiness and dandle her grandchildren. Pantaleone had also intended to go to America, but had died before he had time to leave Frankfort. "And Emilio, our dear, incomparable Emilio, died a glorious death for the freedom of his country in Sicily, one of the 'Thousand' led by the great Garibaldi. We mourned bitterly the death of our beloved brother, but, while shedding tears, we were proud of him, and shall always be proud of him and hold his memory sacred. His lofty, disinterested soul was worthy of the martyr's crown." Gemma then expressed her regret that Sanin's life seemed to have turned out so badly, wished him above all things peace and spiritual tranquility, and said she would be very glad to see him again, though she realized the improbability of such a meeting.

We will not attempt to describe Sanin's emotions while reading this letter. There are no satisfactory words for the expression of such emotions—they are deeper, stronger, and less explicit than words can ever be. Music alone is capable of rendering them.

Sanin replied immediately, and sent the bride-to-be a present—a garnet cross affixed to a beautiful pearl necklace—with the inscription: "Marianna Slocum from an unknown friend." This present, although exceedingly valuable, did not ruin him. During the thirty years that had elapsed since his first visit to Frankfort he had managed to amass a considerable fortune. Early in May he returned to Petersburg, but not for long, probably. There are rumours that he is selling all his estates and is going to America.

Baden-Baden, 1871

